

A PRACTICAL
EXPOSITION

Of the Latter Part of Our
Saviour's Sermon

ON THE
MOUNT,

From the BEATITUDES, to the
End of the SERMON.

By JAMES GARDINER, M. A.
Sub-Dean of *Lincoln*.

LONDON:

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT between
the Two Temple Gates, 1715.

A PRACTICAL
EXPOSITION

Of the Latter Part of Our

Saviour's Sermon

ON THE

MOUNT



From the Beatitudes, to the
End of the Sermon.

BY JAMES GARDINER, M. A.
Sub-Dean of Lincoln.

LONDON:

Printed for Bernard Lintott between
the Two Temple Gates, 1715.

+ 14/11

The Preface

on such Arguments, as our Saviour brings



THE PREFACE.

TH O' the Beatitudes are Subjects so copious and fruitful, that in explaining of them, I have had occasion in the former Volume to trace out *almost* the whole Practice of the Christian Life; yet, because in the remaining Paragraphs of this most excellent Sermon on the Mount, there are some Precepts altogether *new*, and others which may give an Opportunity of setting those already explain'd, in yet a clearer and a fuller Light: I have taken them all into this Second Volume, wherein, avoiding Repetition as much as is possible, I have chiefly enlarged upon such Duties and Vertues as our Saviour recommends to us, which were either not mentioned, or but briefly hinted at before; and up-

The Preface.

on such Arguments, as our Saviour here makes use of to perswade us of the Necessity and Reasonableness of them.

I have likewise for Brevity sake, pass'd by sometimes the *first* Opportunity of enlarging upon some Points, and deferr'd them to another Chapter to which they as properly belonged; because there would else in expounding so large and comprehensive a Discourse, as this of our Saviour, have often been a Necessity of repeating what had been said before. So that if the Reader meet not always with as much as he expected in the first Chapters, he is desired not to condemn the Omission, till he has read over the whole Exposition; which is designed for a complete, but short Summary of Christian Practice.

All I have farther to add, is, that the Reader look for no more than a plain practical Exposition, the full Sense and Meaning only of our Saviour's Precepts. This I thought proper to advertise, because some (I know) have found fault with the first Volume (*viz.* of the Beatitudes) for want of more *Application*: they were pleas'd to call the Chapters *Sermons*, and then thought them deficient in the oratorical Part; but *this* was *their* Mistake and not *mine*. For I call
led



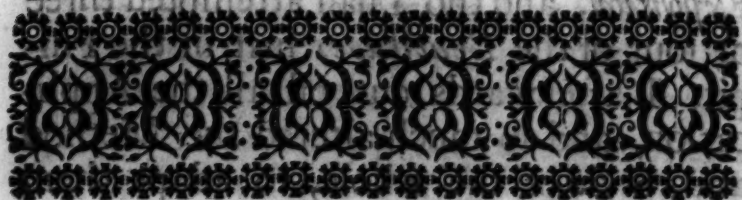
The Preface.

led them not *Sermons*, but a *practical Exposition*, and tho' I had attempted three or four of the *Beatitudes* first in the Pulpit, I afterwards cut off all the Application, and so much altered the Method and Style of the whole, to adapt them to this Design, that they might really be said to be done, *de novo*; and cost me as much fresh Trouble, as they would have done, if I had never treated of them in another manner, which was the Reason that I never preach'd any Part of this Second Volume, but wrote it at first in this way of Exposition.



The Preface.

led them not sermons, but a practical
Familiar, and that I had attended their



to this Design, that they might really be
said to be done, and conform as
much to the People, as they would have

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.
OF EXEMPLARINESS. Page 1.
MATT. V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

CHAP. II.
*Of the Excellence of the Christian Morali-
ty above that of the Jews.* 26.
MATT. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

CHAP. III.
*Of causeless Anger, and of contemptuous
revenging Language.* 51.
MATT. V. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

CHAP. IV.
*Of Chastity, and of needless Separation af-
ter Marriage.* 78.
MATT. V. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

CHAP.



The Contents.

CHAP. IV.

Of taking God's Name in vain. Page 100.

MATT. V. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

CHAP. V.

Of Forgiving of Injuries. 113.

MATT. V. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

CHAP. VI.

Of Loving of Enemies. 133.

MATT. V. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

CHAP. VII.

Of Almsgiving. 152.

MATT. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Prayer. 170.

MATT. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

CHAP. IX.

Of Fasting. 193.

MATT. VI. 16, 17, 18.

CHAP. X.

*Of not laying up Treasures upon Earth,
but of laying them up in Heaven, and of
Trust in God's Providence.* 212.

MATT. VI. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,
27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

CHAP. XI.

The Contents.

CHAP. XII.

Of Censure and of Reproof. Page 258.

MATT. VII. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

CHAP. XIII.

*Of Importunity in Prayer, and of Doing
as we would be done by.* 274.

MATT. VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the Difficulty of the Christian Life. 303.

MATT. VII. 13, 14.

CHAP. XV.

Of False Teachers. 321.

MATT. VII. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

CHAP. XVI.

*Of the Necessity of obeying the foregoing
Precepts.* 342.

MATT. VII. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

THE CONCLUSION. 360.

MATT. VII. 28, 29.





A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

Of the last Part of Our
Saviour's SERMON
On the MOUNT.

CHAP. I. Of EXEMPLARINESS.

MATT. V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

Ye are the Salt of the Earth; but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under Foot of Men.

Ye are the Light of the World. A City that is set on an Hill, cannot be hid.

Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Bushe: but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light unto all that are in the House.

Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your Good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.



HIS first Paragraph is an Exhortation to be *Exemplary* in our Religion, enforced by several Comparisons, which shew that God by calling us to the Profession of Christianity, *designs* and *marks us out* for good Examples of Virtue and Holiness to the World, that such Examples *may do much Service*, and that Men who know the Excellence of that Religion we profess, *will certainly expect them from us*. Let me therefore open to you the true Meaning of what our Saviour has delivered, in the four Verses now under Consideration, by supposing him to have press'd it in the following Manner.

“ I have told you, my Disciples, that
 “ if ye will indeed be Followers of me,
 “ ye shall be blessed and happy. The very
 “ Practice of what I require will make
 “ you so; and the future Rewards of
 “ your Obedience will more than answer
 “ all

CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

3

"all your Pains and all your Expectati-
 "ons. But this is an Argument from
 "your Interest only; there are other and
 "more generous Motives yet behind.
 "'Tis fit that as ye see I have provided
 "for your Happiness, ye should so live
 "as may be for my Glory. If ye live not
 "more strictly and vertuously in every
 "Point than the Generality of Men, the
 "World will think, I either taught you
 "no better, or that ye despise my Teach-
 "ing, both which will be dishonourable
 "to me. But if ye live as I have taught
 "you, they will say *that God is in you of*
 "*a Truth*; they will commend that ex-
 "cellent Institution I deliver you, and
 "will be drawn to love and to embrace
 "that Doctrine, and those Manners which
 "are so much the Ornament and the Hap-
 "piness of those who do embrace them.
 "I know however the Force of Truth is
 "such, that when they hear my Gospel
 "preach'd, and read the Laws which I
 "have given you, they will own the Ex-
 "cellence of my moral Precepts, and
 "will be sure to expect that ye who ac-
 "knowledge me to be your Master, should
 "*do the Things that I say*, and should be
 "as much better than other Men, as my
 "Instructions are beyond the Virtue of
 "the *Gentile* or the *Jewish* Schools. When
 "they

"they talk of any Part of Righteousness,
 "they will naturally look to you for an
 "Example, as the Religion ye profess ob-
 "liges you; the Intention whereof is
 "more than a meer inward Faith, and
 "secret Piety; it is to make you *emi-*
 "*nently*, as well as *really* good, and to
 "set you up as Public Patterns to Man-
 "kind. Consider your selves therefore,
 "as the *Salt of the Earth*, by whose Spi-
 "ritual Conversation all who know you,
 "may be seasoned with a due Relish and
 "Tincture of Christian Piety and Good-
 "ness. But if ye become insipid and
 "useless, ye will be the worst and the
 "most contemptible of all Men. Con-
 "sider your selves as the *Light of the*
 "*World*, a *Candle set on a Candlestick*,
 "for the Direction and Use of all that
 "are about you, and as design'd by your
 "Heavenly Father and Me, to light Men
 "out of the Ways of Ignorance and Vice,
 "and shew them by your bright Exam-
 "ples the Way to Truth and Holiness,
 "and eternal Glory. Consider that the
 "Eyes of all Men will be upon you as
 "professing such an holy Institution.
 "Whatever ye do will be observed, and
 "can no more be hid than a *City that*
 "*stands on an Hill*: and therefore as ye de-
 "clare your selves to be my Disciples, let
 "the

CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

“ the Light of your strict and virtuous
“ Lives to shine before Men, that they
“ seeing your good Works, and admiring
“ the excellent and useful Spirit of Chri-
“ stianity, as it appears in you, *may glori-
“ fy your Father which is in Heaven,* and
“ chearfully subscribe to worship and o-
“ bey him as ye do.

All this I take to be the true Design
and Meaning of our Saviour's Precept
here, and the Reason upon which it is
grounded. Let us now consider more
distinctly,

I. What those good Works are, where-
in it is expected we should become
Examples to all about us.

II. What it is to be exemplary in those
good Works.

III. Who they are, that are concerned
to be thus exemplary in good Works.

IV. How they may be said to glorify
God thereby.

I. What those good Works are where-
in it is expected we should become Exam-
ples to all about us. They are in general
the sincere and constant Practice of the
whole Christian Religion, but particular-
ly of such Duties and Vertues as have
been recommended to us in the foregoing
Beatitudes. As, B 3. (1.)

(1.) Humility, thinking and speaking modestly of our selves, and of every Thing relating to us, despising no Man, condescending to those below us, being courteous to all, and ready to give Place, not only where it is due, but sometimes where it is not, rather than contend for it: Sitting loose to all Enjoyments of the World, not ambitious of Power, or covetous of Riches, not vain and haughty if we have them, nor eager in desiring more: but content with our Condition whatever it is, bearing Poverty without Murmuring, and Contempt without Resentment.

(2.) An hearty Sorrow for all our own Sins, expressed in a ready Compliance with the Discipline of the Church, and a careful Avoidance of all Temptations for the future. A charitable Concern, or a compassionate Grief for the Sins or the Calamities of others, but a great Calmness and Moderation with regard to any temporal Evils of our own.

(3.) Meekness under all Sufferings from the Hand of God or Men. Obedience and Reverence to the King, to Magistrates, to Parents, Husbands, Masters, or any other to whom we should be subject. Obliging Behaviour and Respect to Friends. Forbearance, Patience, and doing good to Enemies. Giving no wilful

CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

7

ful Offence or Provocation to any Body. Not given to Positiveness or Contradiction. Not railing at or speaking evil of others, but covering the Faults of our Neighbours in Conversation, and putting the best Construction upon every Thing that it will bear. And lastly, all manner of Gentleness towards those who are under our Government, or any way below us.

(4.) A generous Aim at Perfection, a Mind not satisfied with any certain Stint of Goodness, but catching at all Opportunities of growing wiser and better every Day. Frequenting the *publick Prayers* and *Sermons* at Church, and that with a severe and close Attention, a regular and decent Piety, receiving as often as we can, the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*: keeping up the Exercise of Religion also in our Families by Prayer, Reading, and good Instructions. And together with all this, a prudent and industrious Zeal to make Religion flourish in our Neighbourhood, or where-ever else we can promote it.

(5.) A merciful Disposition to pity, support, and do all the Good we can, to such as are in Want and Poverty, or any other Affliction, *weeping with those that weep*, being kind and tender hearted, charitably

giving or lending as there is Occasion :
 Releasing Debts where an honest minded
 Debtor is not able to pay ; helping the
 Oppressed and Fatherless to their Right, so
 far as it is in our Power ; and punishing
 Offenders (when the Law calls for it) in
 such a manner as will shew us far from
 an ill-natured Delight in punishing.

(6.) An honest Simplicity in all our
 Words and Actions, without any Disguise
 or double Meanings, being sincere in all
 our Friendships and all our Civilities ; fair
 and ingenuous in all our Dealings, plain
 and open in our Promises, and just to the
 Performance of them. A strict Purity
 in Conversation, avoiding every Thing
 obscene or indecent ; a Chastity in our
 Behaviour, free from not only all actu-
 al Lewdness, but from all lascivious Steps
 towards it. A constant Course of Tem-
 perance and Sobriety, abhorring even the
 most remote Degrees of Drunkenness.

(7.) A peaceable Temper with regard
 both to the Church and State, detesting
 all manner of Schisms in the one, and
 Factions in the other ; and labouring so
 far as it may be any way in our Power,
 to prevent or put an End to such Distur-
 bances, not affecting Novelty, not rai-
 sing a Dust against every Thing we do not
 like ; but attending impartially to Argu-
 ments

ments on either side, complying as far as we can, or retaining our different Sentiments with Charity and Good-nature; endeavouring also in our Neighbourhood to make Peace amongst others; and, *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all Men.* Rom. 12: 18.

(8.) Constancy under Persecutions; *holding fast the Form of sound Words, the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel; going on with Resolution and Courage, in the Discharge of every Christian Duty, whatever Sufferings, Reproach, or Danger may lie before us; and rejoicing under all, as having an Eye to the blessed recompence of Reward.* 2 Tim. 1: 13.

These, and such other Vertues and Graces, make up that *Light* which is to *shine before Men*, the Character of an accomplished exemplary Christian. And can there be a more beautiful Character in the World? Can there be a more illustrious Ornament to human Nature, than one thus uniformly good?

Let us now consider,

II. What it is to be *exemplary* in these good Works; or what it is that is expected from us more than ordinary, with regard to them. And here,

(1.) We

(1.) We must labour to be *eminent* in every Vertue; not only to have more Vertues than the Generality of Men, but to practise them in a greater Height and Perfection. We must do something *extraordinary* in Religion; not contenting our selves with the common Degrees of Goodness, or with just so much as may serve to satisfy the Clamours of Conscience, or be sufficient, as we think, to bring us to Heaven. We must endeavour to be more humble, more meek and peaceable, and merciful, &c. than those who have some Reputation in the World for being so. We must thus behave our selves, not only when there is no great Temptation to the contrary, or when an Occasion happens to us in the common Road of things, but in the most difficult and trying Instances we must give a Proof by our outward Carriage, that the Vertue we pretend to is owing to an inward Principle, and is really habitual to us from the Power and Influence of our Religion.

(2.) The setting a good Example necessarily implies that our Vertues should be *visible and conspicuous to the World*. But here lies a material Difficulty, so to manage this Point, as that Pride and Hypocrisy shall have no share in it. For our

Savi-

CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

11

Saviour cannot be thought to tolerate hereby (much less to require) that Pharisaical Vanity and Ostentation, which in so many other Passages he condemns with all the Earnestness imaginable. The Meaning therefore of this Precept, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works*, cannot be, that our own Glory and Reputation should be the Principle of what we do, or that we should have any Design at all upon the Esteem of Men, so far as it concerns our selves. It is the Virtue, and the Divine Institution of Christianity, from which that Virtue flows, and not the virtuous *Man*, which we should labour to recommend to the Esteem of Men by our Lives. It is that they may *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*, as the latter Part of the Verse sufficiently explains it. The Glory of God and the Good of Men, must be our only Aim in producing our Virtues or good Actions to the public View. We must avoid, as much as is possible, all selfish and unworthy Schemes of *Applause, Respect, or private Interest*, in them; referring all the *Honour to God*, the Author and Inspirer of whatever Good we can attain to; and designing *all the Benefit* (over and above our own Salvation) *to the Souls of others*, who may there.

thereby be wrought upon to come into the same good Measures of Vertue and Religion, which they see us practise, and by consequence be brought at length to the same eternal Happiness which we hope for.

Our next Enquiry (tho' it may seem in part prevented) will demand some necessary Enlargements. Let us consider therefore,

III. *Who they are that are thus concerned to be exemplary in Good Works.* All Christians in general, every one who has professed himself by Baptism a Disciple of the Holy Jesus, is obliged by this Precept to Exemplariness; for it is to these (and not to his Apostles only, or the Clergy) that our Lord directs himself in this whole Sermon: And therefore we find the very same Comparison or Metaphor, which is here made use of, *Light and Shining*, apply'd expressly by St. Paul to every Christian, as such; for so he exhorts the *Philippians*, *That ye be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, amongst whom ye SHINE as LIGHTS in the World.* Every Christian, let his Station or Circumstances be what they will, whether he be a public or

Vid. Introduction
to Vol. I.

or a private Person, known to many or to few, is to look upon himself as obliged to be *holy in all manner of Conversation, as he that has called him is holy*; and make it his Business so to live, as may be a Credit to the Religion he pretends to. This, by his very Profession of Christianity, is expected from him at all Times, and in all Places; but more especially when he lives among Heathens, and other Infidels, Strangers or Enemies to the Name of CHRIST, who will be generally apt to form their Judgment of our Religion rather by the Influence it has upon our Consciences and Practice, than by its own Truth and moral Excellence. They hear it called indeed an holy Religion, an Institution of great and glorious Vertues (and such it certainly is) but when they cast their Eyes upon *our Lives*, and observe, that instead of all this Holiness and Vertue, that should follow there, we are *no better than themselves*, and too often (I fear it may be said) much worse; will it not be a most dreadful Prejudice to Christianity? Let all who travel abroad to such Parts of the World where our Religion is not known or not received, all who go to reside in our Foreign Factories and Plantations, consider this Precept of our Lord, as more immediately affecting *them*.

Let

Let it be their Care above all things so to live, as becomes the Gospel of Christ, having their Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that by their good Works which they shall behold, they may glorify God in the Day of Visitation; and be ready to embrace, when preached to them, that holy Faith, that pure and perfect Law, which shines so bright in Practice. But if they live contrary to it, they disgrace themselves, and their Religion too; they make Christianity to be abhorred, the Name of GOD and CHRIST to be blasphemed among the Gentiles; and wo to him by whom the Offence cometh. The Case is much the same with such as live in a vicious Neighbourhood, where Christianity is profess'd, but little or nothing of the true Spirit of it to be seen. Those few who are good in such a Place, have need to be exemplary in Goodness, and have peculiar Obligations upon them so to be. That Christian who by the Grace of God has withdrawn himself from the evil Customs and Practices of the wicked World about him, and makes Profession to live more strictly to his Saviour's Rules, to be more sober, vertuous, and religious, than those others, and those much the greater number, who own the Name of CHRIST, but in their Works deny him, is very deeply

con-

Phil. i. 27.

1 Pet. 2.

12.

Rom. 2.

24.

1 Tim. 6.

1.

Mat. 18.

7.

Tit. i. 16.

concern'd to give a great and eminent Example of all sorts of Vertue. To be indifferently or obscurely Good, is but a barren, I had almost said a contemptible Character *in him*. GOD and the World expect much more from him, or the one will have but little Glory, and the other but little Benefit by his Example. He is bound in *Point of Honour*, as well as Conscience, to *excel*, as he pretends to be more effectually convinced than others, of the Excellency of the Christian Law, and the Reasonableness and Necessity of Living up to it. But to proceed, tho' *all Christians* in whatever Station are bound to be Exemplary, that others may be drawn to Goodness, and encouraged in it, there are some whose *Order, Rank, and Circumstances* in the World, will carry the Light of their good Works much farther, and by the more extensive Influence, or at least the greater Power and Weight of their Examples, may glorifie GOD more effectually, than such as have not those Advantages. Amongst these I reckon,

(1.) *Princes and Great Men*, all whose Birth and Quality, Estate or Reputation, make them regarded above the general Level of Mankind. 'Tis evident by long Experience, that the Example of such

as

as I have now mention'd, has force enough to bring either Vertue or Vice *into Fashion*. These are indeed a City set on an Hill, which cannot be hid; whatever good or ill they do, will be observ'd by every Body, and talk'd of far and near. And as 'tis impossible to *conceal* their moral Character, because the Station they are in exposes it whether they will or no, 'tis almost as impossible to defeat the Influence it is likely to have on the Morality of others. Whatever the *Prince* is, the Court will either be or seem to be, because of their Dependance and Expectation from him. Whatever the *Court* is, the City and Country Gentlemen will be apt to imitate, and to endeavour to recommend themselves by putting on the Courtiers Vertues or Vices. The Common-people look upon the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, who live amongst them, as their Patterns, right or wrong, and by a natural Pride are prone to *value themselves* upon doing as *they* do. It is therefore of exceeding great Consequence, that these Men of Note and Figure should set good Examples: For probably nothing of meer Human Means would tend more effectually to reform the Age, than such Examples, general and continued, as 'tis certain the contra-

ry tends more than any Thing to debauch it.

(2.) The *Clergy* in all Stations and Degrees, are peculiarly bound in *Decency* as well as *Duty*, to live up to what they preach. The World is so well satisfied in this, that the Clamour of their Countrey will assuredly follow them, if they do not; and nothing gives a more popular Scandal to Religion, than the vicious Lives of such, as by their very Function and Office are sent forth to be *Preachers* of Righteousness. 'Tis true, that if they set an ill Example, it is no Excuse for despising or neglecting the Holy Precepts, which, by Authority from Christ who sends them, they deliver; for let them *live* as they will, yet if they give us from the Pulpit the true Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel, what they preach, and not what they practise, is certainly the Rule by which we shall be judged for Eternity. Our Saviour has plainly taught us to distinguish thus, in his Remark upon the Scribes and Pharisees: *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not after their Works, for they say and do not.* Yet the Obligation upon the Christian Clergy, to live up strictly to

Vol. 2. C their

their Doctrine, is as strong as Scripture and Reason can make it. St. Paul charges Timothy, *Be thou an Example of Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity.* And St. Peter gives it, as a general Order to all Elders or Presbyters, that they should be *Examples to the FLOCK, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a Crown of Glory, which fadeth not away.* As for their Obligation from Reason, there needs no other Argument for their Exemplariness, than that a Character for Vertue and Piety will be of mighty Advantage to them in the Discharge of one great Part of their Office, that of *Perswasion*; for no Man can be a good Preacher, who is not remarkable for a good Life and Conversation, a Reputation for Vertue being of great use to an Orator in gaining upon the Affections of any Auditory. Virgil makes the Authority of such a Speaker, of Force enough to appease the Anger of an enraged Multitude.

Tum pietate gravem, ac meritis si forte vi-
(rum quem
Conspexere, silent, arrectisq; auribus astant,
Ille regit dictis animos, & pectora mulcet.

(3.) Another Order of Men, whom I reckon to be under special Obligations to an exemplary Life, is Magistrates; such as by whatever Title are entrusted with the Execution of either the Civil or Ecclesiastical Laws of their Country. The Legal Punishment of Vice, so far as it falls within the lash of Canon or Statute, is doubtless, as much a Part of their Business as any other. They are the *Ministers of God, Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil*, sent by him with this express Commission, *for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well*. If this be their Office, as it certainly is, ought not they in Point of Honour and Justice, to set Examples to those they govern, of all those Vertues which their Commission ties them to protect and recommend? Rom. 13.⁴

(4.) Parents and Masters of Families are peculiarly obliged, tho' their good Example be contracted within a narrower Observation, to let it shine as far as it can, for it may be of great Importance. Children from that natural Love implanted in them towards their Parents, are almost necessarily led to the Imitation of what they hear them say, and see them do. And Servants enured by the

constant Familiarity of every Days Attendance upon them, will be apt to take the strongest Impressions from *their* Example, and to practise accordingly, when they set forward in the World themselves. If a Parent or Master shews himself Pious and Vertuous in all his Conversation, 'tis to be hop'd, that all his Dependants will hereafter, in their several Families, pursue the same good Methods of keeping up Religion by daily Prayers, and reading of the Holy Scriptures, by a serious Observation of the Lord's Day, and bringing their Children and Servants constantly to Church, in which themselves have been train'd up, and propagating it to late Posterity.

There remains now only the Fourth General Head to be considered; and that is,

IV. *How we may be said to glorifie God by our good Works.* God is Essential and Eternal Glory, to be himself is to be infinitely Glorious, and Glorious only from himself. His Justice, his Mercy, his Power, his Wisdom, his Truth, his Unchangeableness, his every Attribute is a distinct and perpetual Ray, and such an abundant Stream of Glory from his own Divine and Excellent Nature, as renders it

CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

21

it impossible, for either Men or Angels in a strict Sense to glorifie him; that is, to add any new Honour or Lustre to him, by any Thing they can say or do. But tho' we cannot make him more glorious than he is, we may *so declare his Glory* to our Fellow-Creatures both by our Words and Actions, as may make them more deeply sensible of it, and draw them to the like Acknowledgment and Admiration of him. And in this Sense, I suppose it is, that we are so frequently enjoined to *glorifie God*, and to *do all to the Glory of God*. And we are told, not only in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, but in several other Places of the New Testament, that God is pleased to look upon himself as then especially glorified by us, when by an Holy Conversation, fruitful in good Works, we imitate him, and live according to his Laws: *Herein is my Father glorified*, says Christ, *that ye bear much Fruit*. So St. Paul also, *Being fill'd with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus unto the Glory and Praise of God*. And St. Peter exhorts Christians, so to behave themselves amongst the Gentiles, *That by their good Works which these shall behold, they may glorifie God in the Day of Visitation*. Now God is glorified by

Rom. 15.

6.

1 Cor. 10.

13.

John 15.

8.

Phil. 1.

11.

1 Pet. 2.

12.

our good Works, or in other Terms, we do by our good Works set forth the Glory of God, and recommend him to the Veneration and Esteem of our Fellow-Creatures.

(1.) As he is our *Creator*. He made Mankind in his own Image, and stamp'd upon him the Impressions of his own Holiness, Goodness and Beneficence. By the Fall we became wretchedly degenerate, and lost this Likeness to him in which we were created; but by the Assistance of his Grace given unto us in the New Covenant by Jesus Christ, we are enabled in some Measure to recover it; and the more Holy our Conversations are, and the more Beneficent we are to others, the more honourably we represent our great Creator, whose Image we were made to bear. Whatever Goodness we have, must necessarily be derived from *him*: For the *Moral*, as well as natural Excellence of our Being, can be no more our own primary Act or Improvement, than our Being it self. If so, the glorious God who made us must be infinitely Good, or he could not have communicated any Thing of Goodness to us. By our good Works therefore we represent, tho' imperfectly, the Goodness of
God

God who has stamp'd his own Image upon us, and who has qualified us for, and incites us to the Practise of them. We glorifie God thereby, as we lead Men to the Consideration of him, as the Fountain of every Excellence, the *Author of every good and perfect Gift*; the ^{James 1. 17.} main Spring of all the Benefits which Men receive from us, from one another, or from the Ministration of any other Creature, as well as from the immediate Hand of his own Providence. But,

(2.) By our Holy Conversation and good Works, we also set forth the Glory of God as our Redeemer, and Law-giver. We are expressly told by St. Paul, what the Design of our Redemption was; *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of Good-works.* And in another Place, that *we are created in Christ Jesus unto Good-works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.* Now when we answer the Design of our Redemption, and walk in that Order, and in the Practise of those Things which are prescribed to us thereupon, we may be said to glorifie our

Redeemer, as we publicly justify his Undertaking, acknowledge our selves to have been in a State of Misery and Condemnation, confess the Necessity of his redeeming Love, and that the Method which he has appointed, is the only Way to be Safe and Happy. By our ready Compliance with him on his own Terms, we necessarily imply all this, and by embracing the strict Conditions of Holiness, purely at his Direction, against the Current of our sensual Appetites, our natural Passions, and our worldly Interests; we plainly declare our Esteem and Veneration of him, we subscribe to the Wisdom of the Lawgiver, and to the Excellence of his Laws, and we recommend them by our Example to the Liking and Obedience of others, as Holy, Just and Good.

And thus it is, that by our good Works we glorify God. We add no Glory to him, which he had not infinitely and essentially in himself before: But we declare his Glory to the World, and recommend him to the Love and Admiration of our Fellow-Creatures. Let us therefore, as we are bound by all the

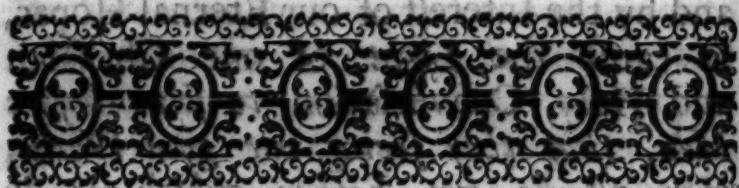
CHAP. I. Of Exemplariness.

25

the Ties of Gratitude and Duty to God, and by the Interest of our Eternal Hopes, so cause the *Light* of our Christian and Holy Conversation to shine before Men, that they seeing our good Works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.



CHAP.

**CHAP. II.**

*Of the Excellence of the Christian
Morality above that of the Jews.*

MATT. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the
Law and the Prophets: I am not come
to destroy, but to fulfil.*

*For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and
Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in
no wise pass from the Law, till all be
fulfilled.*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these
least Commandments, and shall teach
Men so, he shall be called the least in the
Kingdom of Heaven: But whosoever
shall do, and teach them, the same shall
be called great in the Kingdom of
Heaven.*

*For I say unto you, That except your Right-
eousness shall exceed the Righteousness
of*

of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

OUR blessed Saviour being now about to correct certain *Errors*, which were crept into the *Morality of the Jews*, to enforce some *Duties*, which were not before look'd upon as *Obligatory*, and to explain others which were not rightly understood, thought it necessary to usher in these *Improvements* with a *Protestation*, that he was not come to *destroy*, but to *fulfil the Law and the Prophets*; lest either the *Jews*, who were always jealous of any *Innovations* in their *Law*, should be prejudiced against, and offended at him, as derogating from their *Institution*; or lest his own *Disciples* should think, that because he gave them new *Precepts*, he made void their *Obligation* to the ancient *Scriptural Morality*. He therefore adds, *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, &c.* as tho' he should say, "The *Moral Law*,
"the *Precepts of Piety*, and *Vertue*,
"which ye have received from *Moses*
"and the *Prophets*, are of perpetual
"Force, and your *Obligation* to them
"can-

“ cannot by any Means be dissolved,
 “ till the World it self, and all Things
 “ in it have an End. Whosoever there-
 “ fore shall pretend a Liberty from my
 “ Institution, to slight the least of those
 “ Commandments, and to teach Men
 “ that they may do so, will find him-
 “ self in a fatal Error, for he shall ne-
 “ ver enter into that Eternal Glory,
 “ which is the Reward of pious and
 “ obedient Souls: But they, and they
 “ only, who adhere both in their Life
 “ and Doctrine to them, shall be recei-
 “ ved into the Kingdom of Heaven.
 “ For so far am I from abrogating any
 “ of those Duties, and Vertues, which
 “ your Doctors teach you from that
 “ Law, that whatever they bid you ob-
 “ serve with regard thereto, I also re-
 “ quire you to observe and do; and not
 “ only so, but I tell you plainly, that
 “ ye have *much more* to practise than
 “ they teach you; and whosoever from
 “ henceforward shall expect Eternal
 “ Happiness, they must go beyond the
 “ Scribes and Pharisees, both in the
 “ Righteousness of their Lives, and their
 “ Instructions too.

In farther explaining of this Para-
 graph, there will be no Necessity of en-
 larging upon the Meaning of these Words,
 Think

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, because they will be clearly and fully explained, from what will be said on the two following Heads.

I. What must be here understood by our Saviour's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.

II. In what Instances our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

I. *What must be here understood by our Saviour's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.* Our blessed Saviour may be said to have fulfilled the Prophets, in that he accomplished all Things, which the Prophets foretold of him. Hence we meet with this Expression frequently in the Evangelists, *That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Prophets.* And he may be said to have fulfilled the Law, in that he transgressed no one Commandment of the Law. For thus he speaks of himself to the Jews, *Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* And thus to his Disciples, *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* But the meaning of his fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, in this Place, is according to the Sense

John 8.
46.

John 14.
30.

Sense of the Fathers and best Expositors, that he *completed* and *perfected* the *Moral Law* delivered to the Jews by *Moses* and the Prophets, refining upon the several Precepts of it, and extending them to such a Compass of Obligation, as was either wanting or undiscover'd there before. To clear this Matter, it will be requisite to shew,

(1.) That the *Jewish Moral Law* was not designed by God to be the last and most perfect Revelation of his Will: But that the farther Improvement and Perfection thereof, was reserved for the Times of the *Messiah*. Tho' the Almighty, to keep up the Knowledge of Himself as the only true God, call'd the Posterity of *Jacob* to be his peculiar People; and to assert his Right of Government, delivered them a Law by *Moses*, yet he dealt with them therein as a hard-hearted stubborn Race, receptive only of the outward Forms of Religion, but averse to the spiritual and inward Substance of it. For this Reason their Law turn'd chiefly upon pompous Ceremonies and external Observations, that the Parade and Splendor of Idolatry in the Countries round them, might make the less Impression upon the Fancy of a People, that knew not how to relish a plain and simple Way of Worship; and

and that the Mystical Prescriptions of *Heathenism* might not attract their Consciences, who were exceedingly enclined to Superstition. They had also several *Political* Constitutions laid down to regulate them as a separate State; and some few *Moral Precepts*: But these last so sparingly delivered, and in such general Terms, as shews they were only to lead the Way to a future and fuller Instruction, a compleater Revelation which should be made by the *Messiah*. For that such a Revelation more compleat and perfect was reserved for Christ, even *Moses*, their own great Law-giver, foretold, and charged them strictly with Obedience to it. *The Lord said unto me, — Deut. 18. I will raise them up a Prophet from among 17, 18, 19a their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* This is expressly in the New Testament applied to Christ; and what is here said, that he should be like unto *Moses*, imports, that he should be a Law-giver to his People, as *Moses* was, the Author of a New Dispensation and Revelation of the Will of God. And the

Excel-

Acts 3. 22.
Acts 7. 37.

32 *Of the Excellence of the* CHAP. II.

Excellency of his Law is intimated in that Expression, *I will put MY WORDS in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them ALL that I SHALL COMMAND him.*

It's true, the Law of *Moses* was the Word of God, and he delivered nothing but by Command from him: Yet as this Prophecy is most visibly in the Intention of it, a gracious Promise, and a great Signification of the Divine Favour, as also a second Instance of extraordinary Revelation, it must in Reason be supposed, to be more Perfect and Excellent than the former: For if it was not, if they had not sufficient Instruction by the Law of *Moses*, where would be the Benefit that should make it the proper Subject of a Promise?

If a second Revelation be not more perfect than the first, there would be no need of it. And that this more perfect Revelation promised here by *Moses*, and reserved for that great Prophet whom he speaks of, has Reference more especially to the *Moral Law*, and to the Improvements that should be made therein, appears from the declared Occasion of making that Promise to the *Jews*. It is grounded upon the Terror that the People were under from the Thundrings and Lightnings, the sound of the Trumpet, and other awful Signals of God's Presence,

Deut. 18.
16.

sence, when he spake to them from Mount Horeb, or Sinai, and their Desire thereupon, that God would no more reveal himself in that dreadful manner to them. God approved their Request, and promised he would for the future deliver his Commands by *Moses*, and after him more fully by the *Messiah*. Now when was it that God so spake to them, and his Terrors made them so afraid, but when the *ten Commandments*, or the *Moral Law*, was delivered? Exod. 20. 18, 19. Which plainly intimates that the *Messiah* should in after Ages enlarge, explain, and perfect those *Commandments*.

I will therefore now proceed to shew,
(2.) That *Christ* did thus improve the *Moral Law* of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*; and that,

1. As to the *Doctrinal* and *Preceptive* Part of it, in several Instances, which were either wanting in the former Dispensation, or at least unknown and undiscovered there, and not obligatory, till they were revealed by him in the *Christian System*. For proof of this I shall need to have recourse no farther than to his *Sermon* on the Mount, which is now under our Consideration. And I shall but just name the Instances, because they will be treated of more largely in their proper Place. The Third Command-

ment, which the *Jews* restrain'd to the Cases of Blasphemy and Perjury, he has extended to all prophane, and rash or needless Swearing. The Sixth, against Murder, he has enlarged to a Prohibition of all causeless and immoderate Anger or Resentments, tho' only cherish'd in the Breast; but if they proceed so far as to vent themselves in passionate and reviling Language, he has represented to us what was before unknown, the Sinfulness and Danger thereof, with regard to the Punishments of another World: And the Necessity of Reconciliation with an offended Brother, in order to the Acceptance of our Prayers with God. Upon the Seventh Commandment, which the *Jews* thought concerned only the outward and compleat Acts of Lewdness, he has introduced an Interpretation, that makes the very looking upon a Woman with lustful Fancy and Desires, criminal. The Permission of Divorce, which for the Hardness of their Hearts the Law of *Moses* had indulged them, our Saviour has restrain'd to the Case of Fornication only, and reduced the sacred Ties of Marriage to their original Strictness. Retaliation of Injuries had been allowed by the *Mosaical* Law; but Christ has here forbidden it, commands us to love our

Ene-

Enemies, and to return Good for Evil. In these, and several other Precepts, which might be gathered out of this Sermon, and from other Parts of the Gospel, our Lord has raised the Duty of a Christian to such a Pitch of Excellence, as the *Jewish Morality* knew little or nothing of. But this was not all the Advantages he introduced above the Law of *Moses*: For,

2. He improved the Moral Law in respect of the *Sanction* also, the *Promises* and *Encouragements* annex'd to the Observance of it; viz. the *Assistance of the Holy Spirit of Grace*, the *full and free Remission of Sins*, the *Reward of Everlasting Life*, and the *Penalty* incurred by obstinate Disobedience, *eternal Misery in Hell*. The *Jews* had no such *Promises* made them of *Divine Assistance by the Holy Spirit*, to enable them to obey, as we thro' the Mercy of God in Christ abundantly enjoy under the Christian Law. Tho' it is not to be doubted, that all good Men amongst the *Jews* were enlightned and assisted by the Holy Spirit of God, for of our selves we can do nothing, and even bad Men restrained by the same Spirit from being worse: yet this was not the Matter of any *formal and explicit Promise* under that Dispensation, nor were those blessed Influences so freely, frequently, and

eminently poured out, as since the coming of our Saviour. *Remission of Sins* was but sparingly proposed to them, at no small Trouble and Expence in Sacrifices; and even this was still but for Offences of a second Rank. But there were many greater Evils, from which the criminal Jew could not be justified by the Law of Moses: for in the twentieth Chapter of *Leviticus*, and elsewhere, we find Excommunication threatned to several Impieties, either by the immediate Hand of God, or by the Magistrate. In these Cases the Jew had no Place left for Expiatory Sacrifices, tho' God might nevertheless, where true Repentance intervened, be merciful to him in another World, through the intended future Sacrifice of Christ. And to this after-Dispensation by Christ, was reserved that general and public Promise of Pardon for all Sins, even Blasphemy it self, except the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This our Saviour himself proclaimed while he was on Earth, and commanded his Apostles also, that *Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name amongst all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; who accordingly published this great Advantage of the Gospel wherever they came, declaring, that *all who believe are justified by Christ from all things from*

Mat. 12.
31.
Luke 24.
47.

Acts 13.
39.

from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Again, what Moses and the Prophets promised to the Jews for their Obedience, was only with regard to this present Life; a long and happy Establishment in the Land of Canaan, the outward Blessings of Providence, Health and Riches, a numerous Posterity, a fruitful Soil, a flourishing and prosperous State. And what they threatened upon Disobedience, was only Oppression from their Enemies, Captivity, a temporal Death, and other things contrary to the Rewards just mentioned. But the Gospel Rewards and Punishments are of infinitely greater Consequence, even eternal Life and Happiness in Heaven, or everlasting Misery in Hell. It was Christ who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel. He clear'd the Doctrine of the Resurrection both by Arguments and Instances, by raising others from the Dead, and rising again himself. He repeated and confirm'd the Promises of it in plainer Expressions, revealed the future Judgment, and described the State of the Just and Unjust which should follow thereupon, as far as was any ways necessary to guard the Observance of his Precepts, to excite Men to Piety and Virtue, by the Assurance of a Crown of never fading Glory, Joy,

and Peace in Heaven, to the Obedient ; and deter Men from the Love and Practice of Sin by the most dreadful and perpetual Punishments that will attend it in another World. And by all this added a Strength and Sanction to the Christian Law, very far above that of the Jewish.

3. And lastly, He improved it in the *Extent and Compass of its Jurisdiction*, or the Number of Subjects under the Obligation of it. The Law of *Moses* was given but to one particular Nation, and demanded not Obedience from any other, except those few religious Foreigners who should from time to time become voluntary Profelytes. The rest of the World were left to live by the Dictates of meer natural Conscience, and the dim Light of Reason, sometimes improved, but oftner perplex'd by the various and uncertain Schemes of Philosophy. But the Church of God, which for so many Ages was confined to a little Corner of the Earth, the Land of *Canaan*, was to be extended to all Nations without distinction, when the Messiah should appear. His Law was to be universal, and to oblige the whole Race of Mankind. And no Law could be better fitted for that purpose: The whole Burden of Ceremonies being laid aside, the Institution of Christ is such as flows

flows from natural and eternal Right, is agreeable to the Reason and Capacity of all Mankind, a plain and practicable Institution, and the fittest of any that could be contrived to suit with all the various Circumstances of those that are to be governed by it, and to make all Societies, under what Political Form soever, safe and happy in the due Observance of it. This Revelation therefore was in its own nature too great, too general a Blessing to be engrossed by any one particular People. 'Twas adapted to the Good of *all*, and *all who would* should have the Benefit of it: For so the Prophets long before Christ came had prophesied: *Behold my* Isa. 42. 1, *Servant, whom I uphold, says God, mine* 4. *Elect, in whom my Soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have Judgment in the Earth, and the Isles shall wait for his Law.* Accordingly the Apostles of Christ were sent by him with a general Commission to preach the Gospel in *all Nations*, not only in *Jerusalem*, and in Luke 24. *all Judea*, and in *Samaria*, but unto the 47. *uttermost Part of the Earth.* And this, Acts 1. 8. blessed be God, we find in a great part accomplished, and wait for the more compleat Accomplishment thereof, when the

Rom. II.
25.

Fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Having now discharged my self of the first general Head, and shewn you, that by our Saviour's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, is here meant his perfecting the *Moral Law*, which not only needed, but expected such an Improvement from the *Messiah*, and actually receiv'd it, as ye have seen in many Particulars; I must now direct your Thoughts to consider,

II. In what Instances our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

(1.) We must go upon a right *Bottom* and *Foundation of Practice*; we must not mistake, and do unrighteous things for righteous. The Scribes and Pharisees, notwithstanding that they were Teachers of the Law of God, were notoriously under this fundamental Error, they *trusted in themselves that they were righteous*, pretended not only *more than others*, but even *exclusively of others* to that excellent Character; and yet the Zeal, which *they* made such a Figure with, was but so much the greater a Violation of the true Righteousness, because they mistook in the Application of it; under a false Idea of *serving God* they *persecuted the Son of God*, and with the utmost Bitterness re-
jected

jected the only true Religion, for Religion's sake. St. Paul also, while he continued a Pharisee, did the same, supposing himself the more righteous for his Severity against the Christians; for, says he, *I verily thought with myself, that I OUGHT* Acts 26.9. *to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* And so he testifies of his Countrymen the Jews in general, that they had a Zeal for God, but not according Rom. 10. 2. to Knowledge. It was an ignorant Zeal, and wrong grounded, mistaking Evil for Good, and Good for Evil. 'Tis easy to discern how fatal such a Mistake must be, and that the greater Progress Men make in such a sort of Righteousness, the farther they are wandering from the true Way to Heaven. But the Scribes and Pharisees are not the only Bigots that have been thus mistaken. The Histories of the Church, and the Experience of late and present Ages can shew, that the same Spirit of Delusion has possess'd too many *Christians*, who having first been drawn aside into Errors of the greatest Consequence, have under the Notion of Righteousness, not only obstinately defended and improved those Errors, but furiously press'd them upon others, imagining all this while, that by Inhumanity they were doing God good Service. Others there are, who,

who, having cherish'd in themselves many weak and unreasonable Scruples, have wrought their Minds to such an acquired Blindness, as to make a *Duty* of a *notorious Sin*, and maintain *Schism* and *Disorder*, even by Dint of *Conscience*. It is of the utmost moment therefore, that we should guard against such dreadful Mistakes, and be sure that what we do under the Supposition of Righteousness, be *really* such according to the Rule of Righteousness which God has given us.

(2.) The *Design* and *End* of our good Actions must be righteous also; for where this is wanting, there is a Defect in the very Life and Substance of the Duty. Where the *Intention* is indirect, and what we do is but the Issue of some secret Schemes for Reputation or secular Interest, there may be *Policy* in it, but there is no *Religion*; our Righteousness is no better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. For these, our Saviour tells us, did all their Good Works purely to be seen of Men: They prayed, and fasted, and gave Alms, but it was to gain them Applause among the People, that they might be publicly taken notice of with the highest Respect on all Occasions, and by this affected Sanctity make a Property of their devout but ignorant Admirers. The

Mat. 23.
5, 6, 7.

Pro-

Project was to raise their Credit and their Fortunes, and therefore it was their Business to *appear righteous outwardly unto Men, tho' within they were full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity.* But the same Woes, which upon this very account were with so much Earnestness pronounced, even by the meek and merciful Saviour of the World, against Them, are equally level'd against Us, if we take not care to excel them in this material Article, the Sincerity of those Principles, by which we do Righteousness. *A good Man out of the* Mat. 12- *good Treasure of the HEART brings forth* ^{35.} *good things,* says Christ; representing to us thereby the Necessity of a sincere and righteous Mind, to the Production of good and righteous Practices: For however otherwise the Appearance may be plausible to the World, and the Effect of it visible and useful, as the Alms of a Pharisee may be a true Relief to the Poor; yet if the Design, which is the Act of the Heart, be vicious and irregular, the whole Action is sinful, and the Disguise and Varnish of it serves only to aggravate the Guilt of the Actor. But then,

(3.) In respect of the *Degree and Measure* of our Righteousness, it must have a much more generous Compass than that

that of the Scribes and Pharisees, it must be an *impartial* and *universal* Righteousness. Let us not think it enough, when we are exact in some things, and negligent in others; let us not sit down contented with the first and more easy Attainments and imperfect Efforts in Religion, with having set out well, and made some little Progress in it, or with a formal Use of certain Means and Instruments of Righteousness; but grasp at every Virtue, and press forward to Perfection in the Extent of each Particular. And here I might enlarge upon the idle and imperfect Religion of several sorts of People, who never considering to what severe Precepts they are obliged, and what a perfect Example they are to imitate, and what mighty Aids and Assistances are offered them, and what great Rewards are proposed to them; content themselves with low and common Measures, such as meer Nature would teach them, and such as no way answer the Prophecies and Descriptions of that Age of Righteousness, which the Messiah, the last and great Prophet, came to instruct. But I will content my self with a few Instances.

First, There are some who think it sufficient, that they are a *little more civilized than the profane and profligate World*
about

about them. Thus we find the vain-glorious Pharisee valuing himself, and dressing up his own Character, as he thought, to the best advantage, upon this, that he was better than the generality of Men, that he was no Extortioner, not unjust, nor lewd and debauched, as many others were; and yet he was far short of what he should have been, he was weighed in the Ballance, and found wanting: For the poor Publican, being a sincere and thorough Penitent, went home accepted by God, when the other did not. I doubt we have a great number of Christians, who can make no better Pretence to the Favour of God, than this Pharisee here, yet entertain a vain Conceit of their being religious enough, because they are more regular and decent in their Character than notoriously bad Men are. 'Tis a good Rule, that we should never compare our selves with those that are worse, but with such as are better than our selves: The former Comparison will fill us only with Pride; but the latter will shew us our Defects, and teach us to improve.

Secondly, There are some who satisfy themselves with the Observance only of the most obvious and literal Sense of several Precepts. Whatever the Case of the
Jews

Jews was in respect of this, the Gospel of Christ has taught us a more *extensive* Obedience. So that it is not enough now that we abstain from Murder and Adultery, from Theft and false Accusation, and the like plain and visible Acts of Violence and Wickedness; but we must likewise lay aside all Envy, and Spite, and Bitterness, and Evil-speaking, every unclean and brutish Imagination, and the very Love and Desire of Evil. For if we indulge our selves in these, tho' we abstain from the grosser Actions, we are far from the Measure of the Christian Righteousness.

Thirdly, There are others who *rely upon a present good Sense and Disposition of Mind*, expressing it self in Sorrow and Contrition, together with Resolutions of better Obedience; but yet upon the whole matter, are no better than before, never bringing forth the Fruit of godly Sorrow, which is Amendment. That they are sorry for what they have done, shews that they have done amiss; and if they go so far as to make good Resolutions, 'tis still in order to do better; but if these Resolutions come to nothing, 'tis certain that flashy Repentance of theirs will be of no service to them.

There

There are, *Fourthly*, another sort of Men, who rest only in the common Means and Helps of Righteousness, who read much, and hear frequently, and pray often, which are all profitable Means, and recommended to our Use, not only as the Instruments of obtaining good things, but also as the Methods of acknowledging and reverencing Almighty God, and paying to him that Obedience and Praise which he requires of us. But yet how many have miscarried even here? I do not say by the too frequent Exercises of Devotion, but the depending upon them, as if there was nothing more to be done. Whereas in truth, so far as they are really Acts of Worship and Obedience to God, they are still but Parts of Righteousness, and not the whole: But taking them (as Reading and Hearing more especially are) as Methods appointed by God for our Instruction in Righteousness, it is not the bare Use of, and Attendance upon these, without the due Effects of such Instructions for pursuing practically those Directions for an holy Life, which they supply us with, that can denominate us righteous. And even Prayer it self, tho' it is indeed an Act of Worship, and so a Part of our Religion, is also a Means appointed, as other Means are, for our Ad-

48 *Of the Excellence of the* CHAP. II.

Advance in Righteousness; and so we are only to reckon Men righteous in the Use of it, as it has that Influence and Effect upon them: For when Men pray much and often, and yet live dishonestly and viciously in the World, they are no more to be called righteous, than Men are to be esteem'd healthful, that use much Physick, when they languish all the time under a visible Infirmary.

But, in the *Fifth* and last place, there are others who *pick and chuse out* some particular Duties or Vertues, wherein they will be very exact, and fancy God Almighty will excuse them as to all the rest. Thus taught the Scribes and Pharisees, *who sat in Moses Seat*, and were the received Interpreters of the Law of God amongst the Jews; they laid a mighty stress upon the Religion of some one Precept, to the neglect of others; and only differed in their Opinion *which* Precept should be so recommended, as appears by that Question of the Jewish Doctor, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* And our Saviour accordingly in his Answer sums up the *whole Law*, the Love of God and of our Neighbour, to obviate the Mistake, and shew that one Part of the Law as well as another demands our faithful Obedience. We must

Mat. 23.
2.

Mat. 23.
36.

must take the whole Law of God before us, and have respect unto all his Commands. We ought to consider 'em as the Commands of God, whose Authority is equally impressed upon all as upon any one. For, says St. James, *He that said, Do not commit Adultery, said also, Do not kill.* He therefore who abstains from the one, in conscience of the Authority of the Imposer, should for that reason abstain from the other also, otherwise he does not do it in obedience to God. Some Virtues are easy to some Mens Temper and Constitution, or they have been fix'd in them by Education; or the Eyes of Men, and the Rewards of the World, and the Power of Laws, are so many Encouragements to the Practice of them. And from hence it comes to pass, that Men are many times severe and superstitious in some things, and yet very careless and negligent in others. They can govern one Passion, but not another; they will not be revengeful, but must be allow'd to be intemperate; or they can bridle their Appetites, but not their Tongue; or they dare venture to cheat and bear false witness, tho' they will not kill: And so they perform only an imperfect and partial Righteousness, the Principle of Obedience not being the Spring and

Jam. 2. 11.

Mat. 23.
23.

Fountain of their Religion. Others, as if they were still Disciples of the Scribes and Pharisees rather than of Christ, are very nice and punctual in little things of less Concernment, and think by that to atone for solid and substantial Vertues. We find it charged upon those whom our Saviour assures us we must excel in Goodness, or be undone for ever, that they were exact in paying Tythe, even of the smallest Products, *Mint, Annise, and Cummin*, while they shamefully forgot the weightier Matters of the Law, *Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; but our Saviour well determines upon it, *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*. The smaller Matters of Religion, the Ceremonies, the outward Circumstances, and every Injunction of it, ought to be carefully observed; but surely the Argument holds much stronger for the Observance of such Precepts as tend to inward and universal Holiness. There is no Composition to be expected, we must be good to the utmost of our Power in every thing, or like the corrupt defective Scribes and Pharisees, we shall never enter into the Kingdom of God.



CHAP. III.

Of causeless Anger, and of scornful
and censorious Language.

MATT. V. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

Ye have heard, that it was said by them
of old Time, Thou shalt not kill: and
whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of
the Judgment.

But I say unto you, That whosoever is an-
gry with his Brother without a Cause,
shall be in danger of the Judgment:

And whosoever shall say to his Brother,
Raca, shall be in danger of the Council:

But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall
be in danger of Hell-fire.

Therefore if thou bring thy Gift to the Al-
tar, and there remembreth that thy Bro-
ther hath ought against thee;

Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and
go thy Way, first be reconciled to thy
Brother, and then come and offer thy
Gift.

Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the Way with him: Lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.



OUR Lord having in the former Paragraph declared, that such as would be his Disciples, must practise a more excellent and refined Morality, than the Jewish Doctors taught, and carry the Precepts and Prohibitions of the Law of God beyond the then received Interpretations of them, proceeds to give an Instance in the Matter of the Sixth Commandment. The Jews understood by it, no more than what the Letter of the Precept forced them to acknowledge, a Prohibition from Murder, but he extends it to the forbidding of all such ill-govern'd Passions, and provoking Behaviour, as were the Principles, and might move the Occasions of Murder. Let us suppose our Saviour to have express'd himself after the following Manner.

“ Mur-

“ Murder ye know to be forbidden
“ by the Law under the Pain of Death,
“ the Judgment usually inflicted for such
“ a Crime. But the Commission of Mur-
“ der, and the actual shedding of Blood,
“ is far from being all that is restrained by
“ this Commandment. For I, who am
“ sent from Heaven as an Authentic In-
“ terpreter of the Divine Laws, declare to
“ you, that whosoever indulges himself
“ in *rash, unreasonable or excessive Anger*,
“ is in the Eye of God guilty of a *Ca-*
“ *pital Crime*. And whosoever proceeds
“ farther, to *scornful and contemptuous*
“ *Language*, is still a *more heinous* Offen-
“ der, and worthy of a *more severe* Pu-
“ nishment than an ordinary Death, e-
“ ven as a Council uses to be held a-
“ mongst you for the Punishment of *no-*
“ *torious* Malefactors, when the com-
“ mon Methods of Justice are thought
“ too mild and gentle for their Crimes.
“ And he who gives his Tongue the Li-
“ berty of *Reviling*, is still *more odious*
“ to God, and worthy of the most dread-
“ ful Severities, that can be inflicted
“ upon him. If therefore, when you
“ come to pay your Devotions to Al-
“ mighty God, ye remember, ye have
“ been in any of these Kinds injurious to
“ your Neighbour, go first and recon-
“ cile

“ cile your selves to him, and then re-
 “ turn and finish your Devotions, which
 “ then, and not till then, will be accep-
 “ table. Make up the Matter in Time
 “ with your Adversary, whilst it may
 “ be made up, before the Cause comes
 “ to be heard, lest being cast ye be com-
 “ mitted to Prison, from whence ye must
 “ not expect to be released without suf-
 “ fering the utmost Rigour of the Law,
 “ whatever it be.

In explaining of this Paragraph farther, I will not trouble you with a critical Account of the three Degrees of Punishment, referred to in *verse 22*. It will be enough to observe, that by such an Allusion our Saviour signifies to us, that even *causeless Anger* is a Sin, *contemptuous Language* a greater, and *cenforious Reviling* yet worse; and that accordingly a Punishment proportionable to the Degrees of Guilt, is reserved for each of these by the Judgment of God, as well as for the grosser Acts of Murder. The Precept therefore, as it is here refined upon and enlarged, extends,

I. To the moderating of Anger.

II. To the restraining all scornful and contemptuous Language, and all slanderous and vile Reflections.

III.

III. To the obliging us, when we have done an Injury, to repair it as well as we can, and to solicit a Reconciliation as soon as is possible.

Let us consider these distinctly.

I. I begin with the first, the *Rules to be observed for duly moderating our Anger.* It was never the Design of the Christian Religion to root out Human Passions; they being essential to our very Nature, we are not Men without them, but to reduce them to their true Use, and confine them within due Bounds. The Motions of Fear and Love, of Joy and Grief, of Complacency and Anger, are not evil in themselves, but as we use them; Let them be governed by the Law of God, and by the Rules of Reason, and they are as innocent as any other Faculty of the rational Soul, and every way as subservient and necessary to the Ends of Virtue. But if we let them loose, they will certainly drive us before them, as their Slaves, to all Manner of Sin and Extravagance, then the Law of God will be trampled upon, Reason will be overborn, the Peace of our own Minds, and the good Order of all about us will be destroy'd. It is highly requisite, therefore, to keep a strait Rein upon our Passions,

fions, that we may govern *them*, and not they *us*; which, in the Case I am now particularly speaking of, I suppose to be the Meaning of St. Paul's Advice, Eph. 4. 6. *Be ye angry, and sin not.* He suggests indeed, that there is something of *Difficulty* in being *angry* and *innocent* together; because the Corruptions of our Nature have given our Passions that command over us, which nothing but the Grace of God, and our own vigorous Endeavours can restrain; yet certainly, he supposes it to *be possible*, or else the Direction would be absurd. And that we *may* thus preserve our Innocence, it concerns us carefully to look to it, that the *Cause*, the *Measure*, and the *Continuance* of our Anger be under due Prescription.

(1.) First then, we must not be angry *without a great and just Provocation*. I take it for granted, that there are warrantable Causes of Anger, and that Anger is not forbidden where the Occasions are just. But since it is natural to us all, when we are moved to think, with peevish *Jonah*, that *we do well to be angry*; let us consider a little, what those Occasions are, which really *will* or *will not*, justify our being so. One Rule I am sure we may depend upon, that *whatever*

Resent-

Resentments proceed from PRIDE, or from exorbitant SELF-LOVE, are utterly unlawful; for these are Principles corrupt and vicious in themselves, and who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean? And hence we must conclude against all Resentments of Neglect, Contradiction, personal Contempt, and other the like Affronts, whether real or imaginary: Except where the Authority of a Parent, a Master, or a Magistrate is insulted; and then indeed for the sake of natural Reverence and political Order, Contempts become just Occasions of Anger, and ought to be resented. But when the Offence is meerly personal (especially if the Importance of it is not great) Humility and Meekness ought to govern, and all should be pass'd by with a generous Disregard, or softned by Christian Charity. I am sensible, how hard it is for an angry Man to perswade himself, that this, or that particular Occasion (be it what it will) that moves him, has all its Force and Inflammation from his own Pride, or excessive Tendernefs of himself. The Heart is deceitful above all Things, and will frame a thousand Excuses to screen its own Corruption; but what else is it owing to, that Men take Fire so presently, if a piece of Respect

spect to them happen (with or without Design) to be omitted. If one whom they fancy to be an Inferior (and whom will not a proud Person think so?) step before them, or place himself above them; if a Word or two be dropt in Conversation, that seems to reflect upon them; if all they say be not entirely credited; or all their Notions complied with, and all they do approved; How many Contempts, tho' real perhaps, yet trifling, are resented, which ought much rather to be despised! And which is worse, how angry will some Men be when they are *told of their Faults*, tho' in a mild and prudent Way, and only from a kind Intention of reclaiming them. Now what are all these and other Resentments of this kind, but the Issue of Mens Pride, and undue Value of themselves? Every Body will allow it so in another's Case, how hardly soever he is brought to believe it in his own. And therefore *Anger upon such Grounds* must be irregular and unjustifiable. As to the Matter of *real and considerable Injuries*, I do not say, 'tis altogether unlawful to be moved by them; but the less we are so, the better: For there is nothing more insisted on in the Christian Religion, than Patience and Meekness, even on these

these Occasions. The only Anger that is *without question* warrantable (beside what I took Notice of above, in the Case of a just Authority insulted or contemned) is that which arises from a good Man's Love of God, and Detestation of Sin. When he hears the Holy Name of God blasphemed or trified with; his Holy Word prophaned; his Being, his Providence, or his Truths denied; lewd Language or indecent Jest delivered; or uncharitable Reflections vented against an innocent Neighbour; when he sees the Divine Laws trampled upon, Religion scandalized, Debauchery and Vice prevailing: Then indeed *he does well to be angry*: His Lord and Master, upon whom he depends for his daily Bread in this Life, and his Eternal Happiness hereafter, is affronted; and who that has a Sense of Piety and Gratitude can bear it? *Sin* we are not only allowed, but required to hate, and therefore, tho' we commiserate the Sinner, we may and must be angry at *his Sin*. Thus much for the Causes of Anger, let us now see how it is to be governed, with respect to the Measure or Degree.

(2.) Our second Rule therefore must be this, that our Anger be not greater than the Offence deserves. We must carefully

fully confine it within such Bounds, that it may not exceed the *Merits of the Cause*. For so far as it exceeds *them*, so far it is *without Cause*; and therefore unreasonable and unchristian. I confess, there is no measuring out our Resentments by Grains and Scruples, in an *exact* Proportion to every Accident that excites them: But there must be such a general Regulation, as that it shall not be in the Power of *trifling and small Offences* to create in us a *great Uneasiness*; nor of *any Offence at all*, to blow us up into *Storms and Tempests*. Indeed, were we to judge of the Importance of Things by the Weight they ordinarily make upon the Spring of Men's Passions, it would be hard to fix upon any Accident, how minute soever, that would be allowed to pass for a Trifle. Nay, even those Things that really are of moment, and will justify some greater Roughness, do so easily hurry us into Extreams, that there will need much Grace and much Philosophy, and constant Watchfulness to temper and restrain our Heat. Even *Zeal for God*, when it degenerates into Fierceness and Fury, becomes unwarrantable; and how great soever any personal Provocation, or private Injury may be, there are Degrees of Anger, that

that are absolutely, and at all Times unlawful. Revenge is one of these (of which I shall have Occasion to say more hereafter in another Chapter) and the other is, what we properly enough by way of Emphasis call *Passion*; which beside the apparent Danger it brings to such as fall in our Way, or are about us during that Extravagancy, is also disgraceful to human Nature, carries us out of our selves, to do and say what shamefully betrays our Weakness, and renders us contemptible, instead of making us considerable.

But farther,

(3.) Another Rule whereby we ought to govern our Anger is, *That we are not to retain it longer than Reason requires.* And it is retained longer than Reason requires, if it continue after the Fault is acknowledged or amended, Pardon asked, or due Satisfaction given or offered. Or supposing the Offence was trivial, if it continue any longer, than while we are under the first Surprise, that is, if it continue after such Time, wherein we might recollect our selves, and so compose and settle our Minds; there is nothing more contrary to Christianity, than to be implacable and morose, even after just Cause of Anger, and so our Sa-
viour

60 Of causeless Anger, and CHAP. III

vour suggests in his Answer to St. Peter's Question, Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven Times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven Times; but, until seventy Times seven, viz. So often forgive him, as he repents of what he hath done. And so we learn from those

Matt. 18. 21, 22. other Words, If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day turn again to thee; saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him. Where our Lord gives a special Caution, that our Anger do not remain with us a Day, an Hour, nay, a Minute longer than there is just Reason for it, as knowing how dangerous a Passion it is, how apt to grow rankerous and inveterate; and how much Advantage the great Tempter hath against us. And this is that which St.

Luke 17. 3, 4. Eph. 4. 26. Paul suggests, Be Angry and sin not, let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath, neither give Place to the Devil.

II. The Second Article in which our Saviour has improved the Sixth Commandment, is the extending it to restrain all scornful and contemptuous Reviling, and censorious Language. These are

indeed the Effects of Anger, which too generally shews it self this Way; and therefore if Anger, considered only as an inward Repentment, or as expressed in certain Over-acts, tho' short of these, must be restrained and moderated by the Rules given under the former Head; there is no room to doubt, but that such exorbitant Efforts of it, as we are now to speak of, must be yet more heinous in themselves, more deeply offensive to God, and more carefully to be avoided by every Christian. The Word *Raca* is used to signify an empty, witless, or contemptible Fellow; and the Word *Fool* does usually represent to us in the Scripture Language, a *dissolute* or *wicked Man*. And so I take the meaning of this Part of the Paragraph to be, that Words of Reproach and Contempt, add very much to the guilt of sinful Anger. But *slandorous Reviling*, as calling a Man an *impious Wretch*, and the like, is yet a more grievous Offence, and will accordingly be punished. Harsh Words of any kind are to be very sparingly used, not without a great deal of Caution and Discretion, where just Authority corrects, and where it may serve the Ends of Virtue. But such harsh Words as these must never come from us, but under the strictest Regulations of

Tem-

64 *Of causeless Anger, and* CHAP. III.

Temper, Intention and Truth. My meaning is, they are never to be the *Effects of Passion*, never uttered maliciously to *depreciate* and *expose* Men, and never apply'd without the most sensible and certain Evidence. It is not the *using* of such Words in any Account whatsoever that is here forbidden, but when the use of them proceeds from *causeless* or *immoderate Anger*, and from Principles of Spleen and Malice. St. James makes use of the Expression, *O Vain Man*, which is no other than the *English* of *Raca*; and our Saviour himself speaking to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *Ye Fools and Blind*, and frequently calls them *Hypocrites*. From which we may certainly draw this Conclusion, that when those whose Office and Authority it is to reprove or to instruct, think fit to express themselves in such Words, and do it out of a truly charitable Intention, and in a calm and serious Manner, by representing thus to the Consciences of those they speak to, the Folly and Wickedness of a sinful Course, and shewing them their own just Character, where Sharpness may be likely to do good, 'tis no Offence at all against this Precept. But when it is done meerly to expose and ridicule, to vex and exasperate, to vent our Anger, or to gratifie our Pride, it is a most unchristian

James 2.
20.

Matt. 23.
17, 19.

christian Practice. But let us a little more particularly consider,

(1.) The Sin of *Scoffing* and *Derision*, those *Arrows*, as the Psalmist calls them, *even bitter Words*, smooch'd over with an Air of Mirth, and feather'd with an Affectation of Wit; but pointed with ill Nature, and drawn to the Head with all the Strength of Insolence and Malice. And how many are there, that value themselves for being excellent Marksmen in this Way? While they little think of those *Judgments* that are *prepared for Scorners*, when the malicious Laugh shall be quite over with them, and the dreadful Hour shall come, which will make them serious, whether they will or no. Their Behaviour is doubtless *very displeasing to God*, who desires the Good Agreement, Peace and Comfort of all his rational Creatures, and has set the meanest of them above Contempt, by that inestimable Price paid for their Redemption, the Death and Sufferings of his Son. And it is *very provoking to those that are abused by it*, no Sting piercing deeper, or causing greater Smart and Inflammation in the Minds of Men, than scornful Language and Ridicule. As the Business of this is to lessen them in the Esteem of their Neighbours, and

to render them despicable where they live; and as the Event does usually answer the vile Design of it, it becomes a *real Injury* to the Persons so reproached, and consequently is a great *Injustice* to them. And as the Things for which Men are usually derided, are either the Defects of their Understanding, the Deformity of their Bodies, or the Poverty of their Fortunes, it is also barbarous and inhuman, nay, absurd and impious. 'Tis reproaching them for what they cannot help, 'tis loading them with Scorn for what deserves our Pity; 'tis either supposing them to have made themselves, (for else their natural Defects in Mind or Body, could not be imputed to them as a Reproach;) or blasphemously reflecting upon God who did create them, and finding Fault with the Workmanship and Order of Divine Providence, which for Reasons far above our Censure, has thought fit to make a Difference in Mens Understandings, Shape and other Circumstances. The Design of this, so far as we can dive into it, is to exercise our Compassion one towards another, and to present continual Objects for our good Nature to support, and Charity to relieve. But this is impiously perverted, if instead of comforting, pitying and assisting,

sitting, we triumph in their Sorrows; sport with their Defects, and play upon their Misfortunes. God visits his abominable striking no himself, for he has declared, That *whoso mocketh the Poor, he reproacheth his Maker; and he that is galled in calamities, shall not be unpunished.* And how great the Punishment is that threatens them, we may learn from the Prophetical Curses uttered against them by the Psalmist inspired by God, and recorded in Scripture for our Terror. *Thine Indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful Anger take hold of them. Let their Habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their Tents.* And for what Cause? For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they taunt to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. And therefore, says he, *Add Iniquity to their Iniquity; And let them not come into thy Righteousness.* Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the Righteous. I might add here, that not only *devisive Words*, but all such *Actions and Behaviour* as are of the same tendency, must by Brevity of Reason be reduced under the same Prohibition. For *Actions* have a Language as effectual as any Words, and sometimes more expressive. All scornful Looks, therefore, and

all Gestures of Contempt and Mocking, all wilful Affronts in our Carriage, all designed and evident Neglects, and whatever may seem to trample upon our Neighbour, and is visibly intended to lessen and ridicule him, cannot but be equally hurtful to the Sufferer, and equally odious both to God and Man.

(2.) *Censorious Railing or Reviling* is, in the Eye of God, a Sin of yet greater Consequence, and more offensive. Our Saviour gives us here one Instance to represent and include all others of the like Kind: *Whosoever shall say, Thou Fool.* Which taken in the ordinary Sense, may stand for any bitter and reviling Term of Passion; and as the Scripture Language does usually by *Fool* intend a wicked and abandoned Sinner, the Expression here seems especially to point out those rash, uncharitable, and furious *Censures*, which Men of angry Spirits and ill governed Zeal are apt to cast upon such as oppose them in Religion, or any thing else; or on those whom they have taken an hatred to, from some personal and private Pique. When Men are thoroughly heated against an Adversary, they are apt to fancy to themselves a License (which neither the Laws of God nor natural Right will authorise) of saying all the *bitter things they*
can

can against him, without any Restraint from Charity or Good Manners, and often with as little regard to Truth. Every Failing of his shall serve to expose him as an Hypocrite; his Vertues shall be all misconstrued, and ascribed to Ostentation and Self-Interest; or his Vices shall be so improved, as if he were the vilest Sinner upon Earth. Now 'tis all one whether a Man be thus ill treated *to his Face*, or *behind his Back*: The former indeed is more provoking, the latter more ungenerous; but both are included in this severe Denunciation of our Saviour against *whoever shall say to his Brother, Thou Fool*. 'Tis spoken of as a greater Crime than Mocking and Derision; because it is much worse to be wicked, than to be either deformed, poor, unfortunate, or of weak Understanding; and consequently must strike deeper into Mens Reputations to be so represented, than only to be rendered contemptible. *Reviling*, as it is the Effect of Rage and overheated Spirits, is also a very near Approach to *Murder*; the same Degree of Spleen and Passion that enflames Men to the one, having frequently ended in the other: And therefore our Saviour forming his Prohibitions here to guard the Sixth Commandment, had reason to lay the greatest stress upon such

Sins as would be likeliest to endanger it. Beside, that it is utterly inconsistent with the Meekness, Patience, and Charity of the Christian Religion, which strictly forbids it, even under the highest Provocations. *Be pitiful, be courteous,* says St. Peter, *not rendering Evil for Evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, Blessing.* And thus the primitive Followers of our Lord behaved themselves. *Being reviled,* says St. Paul, *we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.* And thus their holy Master had taught them by his Example: *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Now if a Christian suffering under such ill Usage is forbid (tho' natural Resentment strongly prompts him, and his Adversary deserves it justly) to retaliate, I need not prove he should not give the first Provocation. Let me observe only, that this Practice of Reviling is so hateful to the God of Peace and Charity, so contrary to the Temper of Heaven, that Michael the Archangel contending even with the Devil, durst not bring against him a railing Accusation; but said, *The Lord rebuke thee.* And as by the Divine Authority of our Religion, a Railer is infamous, and every

Chri-

Christian is discharged from keeping Company with him upon Earth; so by a declarative Sentence passed already, he stands excluded by Name from the Society of the Blessed in Heaven. For what Happiness or Peace could we imagine there, and how should the Sufferings of good Men be at an end; and Charity be made perfect in that State, if such reviling Spirits were admitted, as must needs disturb them.

1 Cor. 6.
10.

Let us now consider in a few Words as may be,

III. The Third and last Improvement of the Sixth Commandment, the obliging us to give due and speedy Satisfaction, as soon as is possible. For tho' even the injured and offended Person is bound by the Precepts of Christianity to endeavour on his part also a Reconciliation, by accepting of reasonable Terms when they are offered him, and by a Readiness to forgive; yet I take the Aggressor, or him that gives the Offence, or does the Injury, to be the Person chiefly (if not only) concerned in this Paragraph, as in other Parts of the Sermon we shall find the Duty of the Sufferer more distinctly spoken of. So that supposing us here to be concerned only with the Aggressor; the

Method he must take to reconcile himself to the Party injured or offended, must be according to the Nature of the Wrong or Damage he has done him. Either,

(1.) By *Restitution*, when by Fraud or Violence he has injured him in his Estate, or wrong'd him in a way of Trade and Bargaining. This is a principal Part of Justice. Hence we find in the *Jewish* Law many Rules and Directions for the more exact and regular Performance of it. And tho' there are no precise Measures set down in the New Testament for the *Regulation* of this Duty; yet that it is still in general, a *Duty*, is evident from natural Light, the Gospel of Christ *pre-supposing* (and not always particularly repeating) such Obligations as common Honesty and Reason every day suggest to us. And thus when *Zacheus*, to whom our Saviour shew'd such Respect as to dine at his House, would recommend himself to him and others as a real Penitent, he immediately bethought himself of *Restitution*, and said, *Behold, Lord, the half of my Goods I give to the Poor; and if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold.* And this is the more necessary, because where such false Dealing or open Injustice has been done, *Restitution* is the *first Step* which must

Luke 19.
8.

must be made in order to Reconciliation: We can't expect an injured Man should be appeased without it; nor is it possible to make him due Satisfaction, so long as he continues under the real Effects of the Injury, and we detain that from him, which he only ought to enjoy or to dispose of. In other Cases (particularly the Offences of the Tongue, cenforious Reviling or Detraction, and the like) we are to make him what amends we can.

(2.) By *Reparation to his Esteem and Credit in the World*; endeavouring to do him Justice in as public a manner as we have injured him, retracting our unworthy Censure and Suspicions of him, acknowledging the Fault of that reviling Language we have given him, and doing all that lies in our Power to reverse the *undeserved* Character we have exposed him in; or if deserved, to soften it according to the Rules of Charity; thus labouring as far as is possible (in effect at least) to unsay what we have said, and undo the Mischief we may have done him, that he may not suffer by our unchristian Passion and Indiscretion. 'Tis seldom we *can* effectually make him amends, and set him right this way; which therefore should make us keep the stricter Guard upon our Tongue, that we be not guilty of Offences
and

and Mischiefs that are so hard to be rectified; because the ill-nature of Mankind is apter to take in and nourish the ill Impressions of our Spleen, and the bad Character we give, than any after Vindications or Apologies we can make to soften or retract them; But it is however the only way that we can set our selves to Reparation in this matter; and therefore we are bound in Conscience to it, and let it avail as far as it can to that purpose.

Again, (2.) Where the Injury is of a lower Rate, or when an *Affront* is only in the case, Reconciliation may be effected by *Begging of Pardon*. This is the least we can offer to an offended Brother; and therefore we should never be backward in it, when it will be accepted; Perhaps we may think it a little disgraceful to us; but if it be a Disgrace, the Sin of an ill *Tongue* is but very gently punished by the *Shame of acknowledging it*. And as Pride was the main Principle of that Contempt, or other Rudenesses in our Language, from which the Offence arose; even natural Equity suggests, that no Satisfaction can be answerable, which does not apparently disclaim and mortify that Pride, the Insolence of which is to be made amends for by a contrary Act of Humi-

Humility and Submission. But after all, I shall beg leave to think it *no Disgrace*, but an Argument of an Ingenious Temper, to ask Pardon: and that whatever the vain Maxims of the World may teach, he is certainly the most a Gentleman, as well as most a Christian, who reflects upon it as a greater Shame to have been guilty of such ill-manners, than to retract it; and therefore is always ready with a generous Submission to revoke what he has said or done unworthily.

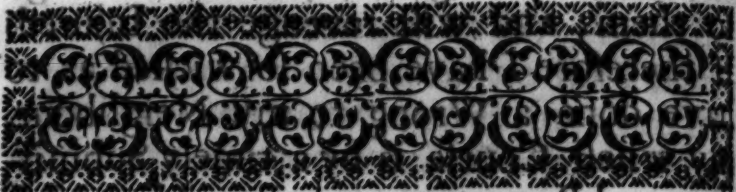
Now which soever of these three sorts of Satisfaction shall become reasonable, according to the Nature of the Offence, and necessary towards a Reconciliation, our Saviour presses it here upon us, to lose no Time, to make no Delays, but immediately to set about it; and that for two very good Reasons: The first is, That our Devotions to God will be all unacceptable, and odious in his sight, till this be done. This is sufficiently hinted in those Words: *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee: Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* It is in vain to hope that God will accept us, so long as, having given our Neighbour just Occasion

of Resentment, our Minds continue the Abuse by an Averseness to give him due Satisfaction, or so long as we shall needlessly delay to offer it. And therefore upon the first remembrance of what we have said or done to grieve him, even tho' we should be then going to the private or public Services of Religion, we are oblig'd, if an Opportunity can be had at that time, to go to him and make up the Quarrel presently, by performing or promising such Satisfaction as the Laws of Christianity require; or if for want of Opportunity it be impracticable, then we must prepare our selves for it, by a Readiness and sincere Resolution at least to do it as soon as possibly we can. And the one or the other of these is so indispensable a Duty, that our Prayers will be but a mocking of God without it. The second Reason urged by our Saviour, is drawn from Prudence, as the first was from Religion. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time thy Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* The Laws of every Nation protect the Persons, Goods, and Reputation

tion of every single Subject that belongs to them, and will revenge the Injured. If therefore I have been so wicked as to have done a Wrong to my Neighbour, my wisest Course is by a timely Submission and Repentance to restore him to his Right, and prevent a Suit at Law, which will force me to it otherwise at a great Expence and Trouble. And thus the present Duty inculcated in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, is an Instance amongst many others which might be produced, that true Religion and true Wisdom are inseparable; the Precepts of Christianity being also Principles of Prudence, and providing as well for our Peace and Interest in this World, as for our eternal Happiness in the next. But the Argument which ought to weigh most with us, in engaging our Practice of this or any other Christian Duty, is the Authority of our Lawgiver *Christ Jesus*.



tion of every single Subject that belongs



tion and Repentance to restore him to his Right, and gives him a law, which will force me to it otherwise as a great

CHAP. IV.
Of CHASTITY, and of Needless
SEPARATION after Marriage.

mongst many others which might be pro-
MATT. V. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.

dom are inseparable; the Precepts of
Ye have heard that it hath been said by
them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit
Adultery.

But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh
on a Woman to lust after her, hath com-
mitted Adultery with her already in his
Heart.

And if thy Right Eye offend thee, pluck it
out, and cast it from thee: for it is pro-
fitable for thee, that one of thy Members
should perish, and not that thy whole
Body should be cast into Hell.

And if thy Right Hand offend thee, cut it
off, and cast it from thee; for it is pro-
fitable for thee that one of thy Members
should perish, and not that thy whole
Body should be cast into Hell.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a writing of Divorcement.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the Cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth Adultery.



FROM improving of the Sixth our Lord here goes on to the Seventh Commandment, which he fortifies by some new and necessary Outworks, not only denies us Entrance into this City of Sodom, but guards us off from any near Approach to it, extending Purity to a more excellent Latitude, reducing Marriage to the Strictness of its original Institution, and putting a Stop to the Beginnings of Adultery in this, as he had taken away the Occasions of Murder in the former; that a Christian may have all his Appetites in due Subjection, that he may be angry and sin not, that he may marry, and not offend. This we may suppose to be the true Meaning and Design of this Paragraph, as much as if our Saviour had expressed himself in the following manner.

“ The

“ The Law forbids Adultery, and ye
 “ do not deny it does so; but beware lest
 “ ye deceive your selves with too short
 “ and narrow Definitions of the Crime,
 “ vainly imagining, that where there is
 “ not the outward Act of Lewdness, there
 “ is no Adultery. For I must tell you,
 “ that whosoever allows his Eyes the Li-
 “ berty of gazing upon a Woman, with
 “ an Intention of kindling in himself or
 “ her, lascivious and unchast Desires; and
 “ whatsoever Woman adorns her self out
 “ of a Design of raising an unlawful Pas-
 “ sion in the Breast of a Beholder; he or
 “ she, tho’ they only indulge themselves
 “ in lustful Wishes and Imaginations,
 “ without proceeding to any unlawful
 “ Act, are Adulterers in the Esteem of
 “ God, and will be punished as such.
 “ And tho’ perhaps, considering the Cor-
 “ ruption of Human Nature, a Restraint
 “ of this kind may seem as grievous as
 “ the plucking out a Right Eye, or the
 “ cutting off a Right Hand; yet it must
 “ be done, if ye will avoid the Torments
 “ of Hell-fire, which wait upon the
 “ Breach of this Commandment. The
 “ Want or Loss of any Enjoyment here,
 “ tho’ never so delightful, or (as ye may
 “ think it) hard to be parted with, is
 “ surely rather to be chosen than eternal
 “ Ruin,

" Ruin. And as to the Matter of Di-
 " vorce, which is another Liberty con-
 " trary to the Tenour of the same Com-
 " mandment, it was indeed for some pe-
 " culiar Reasons permitted to your Fa-
 " thers to put away their Wives, when
 " they had taken a Dislike to them; pro-
 " vided they did it with the Formalities
 " of Law, a Bill of Divorcement put in-
 " to their Hands. But this was not so
 " from the Beginning, nor lawful in it
 " self; only a Licence granted to that
 " stiff-necked Generation, for fear of a
 " worse Consequence, and for preventing
 " of a greater Evil. This Permission I
 " do now by Divine Authority revoke,
 " and I will that ye my Disciples keep
 " strictly up to the primitive Institution
 " of Matrimony, which was such a Con-
 " junction, as made Man and Wife one
 " Flesh, not again to be disjoined, but by
 " Violence; and therefore whosoever puts
 " away his Wife, unless the first of all
 " break the Union by joining her self
 " with another, causeth both her and him
 " that marries her to commit Adultery.
 " This Paragraph therefore supplies us
 " with two Particulars worthy of our En-
 " quiry.

I. The Eknt of this Commandment, and the Height to which our Saviour carries the Notion of Christian Chastity.

II. What he has directed with regard to Divorce.

I. *The Extent of this Commandment, and the Height to which our Saviour carries the Notion of Christian Chastity.* When God, the sole Author and Disposer of all things, thinks fit to publish his Laws and Degrees to the World, it is not for the Devil to contend with the Almighty, and deny his Authority; no, that would be too much; all that this wily Enemy of Mankind has to do, is by false Glosses and Pretexts to beguile the frail Mind of Man, and endeavour to interpret away the Substance of the Command. This we see was the Case with the Jews; the Devil durst not say that Adultery was lawful, when God had given this Commandment, *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*; but taking advantage of the Indulgence that was allowed that stubborn People, for the Hardness of their Hearts, to put away their Wives by a Bill of Divorcement for some great and notorious Crimes, he introduces it into Practice for every frivolous Pretence and

idle Dislike ; and so far prevails over the Minds of that People, that we find their very Doctors and Interpreters of the Law gravely putting the Question to our Saviour, whether it was not lawful for a Man to put away his Wife upon every Occasion. Our Saviour confutes this Error, and at the same time explains the Prohibition in its utmost Latitude, extending it to all Uncleaness of the Mind as well as the Body ; forbidding the *inward Lust of Fancy and Desire* : By which is not here meant all *natural Desire in general* ; for God has implanted no Appetite in us that is originally sinful, or that becomes so any other way but by Corruption and Abuse. Nor is it the *first Kindling* of an impure Thought ; for that an unavoidable Accident *may* do, and when it does, we ought to mourn for the Corruption of our Hearts, and labour presently to suppress it. But what our Saviour here speaks of, is a lustful Inclination blown up into a Flame by our *Encouragement and fond Indulgence*. It is the Act of the Will that makes this sinful ; when a loose Heart sends out the Eye to pimp for its debauched Desires, and the roving lewd Imagination pleases and entertains it self with the Speculation of a Vice, which it wishes for an Opportu-

ty of practising. And in this case Fornication or Adultery is really committed in the Heart; for so far as the Sinner dares to go, he goes: He has the Enjoyment in a corrupted Fancy, and the Defilement sticks upon his Conscience; his Spirit, the best Part of him, is debauched, and no thanks to any Vertue in him, that his Body is not so too. *Whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* When we thus gaze and entertain a vicious Fancy, what do we do else but court Temptation? And where is it like to end, if Circumstances happen to favour our Desires, but in actual and compleat Impurity. St. Peter's Expression is remarkable to this purpose, where he describes some who walked after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleanness, *Having Eyes full of Adultery, and that CANNOT CEASE FROM SIN.* Implying, that the Indulgence they gave to a lustful Eye, not only argued, but encreased the Filthiness of their Hearts, and chain'd them down to Habits of Lewdness by such a powerful Fascination, that they could not cease from Sin. The sad Example of *David* ought to be remember'd also, who from the Top of his Palace gazed himself into wicked Desires of *Bathsheba*, till

2 Pet. 2.
14.

till he had made his Appetite too strong both for his Reason and his Religion, and could not stop short of finishing the Sin his Fancy had begun: nor could he stop even there; for Adultery with the Wife drew him on to a deliberate Murder of the Husband; and the Guilt of both these horrid Crimes so stupified his Conscience, that 'tis thought to be near a Year before he was brought to Repentance for them by the Prophet *Nathan*. Whosoever therefore would be chaste, must keep a strict Guard upon *his Eyes*, and as *Job* did, *Job 31. 1* must make a Covenant with them. He must avoid with abhorrence all unclean Thoughts, and all lascivious Books and Pictures. He must stop his Ears to all Smut, and indecent Jest, and lewd Conversation, and he must shun the Company of such as are addicted to them. For as our Saviour's Design in this Paragraph is to fence in the Seventh Commandment, and in order to that directs us to guard the Purity of our Minds; and that this may be effectually done, he cautions us against such Impressions from without as may defile them: this Instance of looking upon a Woman to lust after her may very well include a Prohibition of whatever is like to contribute to the same Impurity. And now after the Divine Preacher had

thus restrained this Appetite, and directed us to such an Exactness of Purity in our very Thoughts; one would not think, I say, that the Tempter could possibly suggest any thing against this Commandment, that could have any Influence upon us: Yet some Wretches there are so abandoned of God, and wholly given up to Sin and Folly, that after all that our Saviour has said, should he return to the World again, we should hear them exceed their Masters the Pharisees, and even dare to ask their Lord, whether *Fornication* be not lawful, pleading that, by their Interpretation of the Original, it does not appear that Fornication is any where forbid in the New Testament. They are willing to load Adultery as heavy as you please, and paint it in the blackest Colours, if you will but allow Fornication to be comparatively little or nothing: And indeed it must be confest, that Adultery is a Sin of a deep Dye, and has many and very heinous Aggravations; yet 'twere easy to shew that the New Testament every where abounds with Texts against Fornication as well as Adultery, and to shew that they both stand forbid by Name with equal Earnestness. But I shall confine my self to the Argument in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon,
and

and desire to know how Fornication is consistent with the Chastity here prescribed, and the severe Obligations to Purity, which those are under who profess to serve a pure and holy God, and are baptized into a pure and holy Religion. For this is the Will of God, even our Sanctification, that we should abstain from Fornication; that every one of us should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour, not in the Lust of Concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, who know not God. Must I refrain from every loose and idle Thought, and may I commit actual Lewdness? Must I not look on a Woman to lust after her, and may I fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh with her? Must I cut off a Right Hand, or pluck out a Right Eye, rather than be ensnared by them, and may I become one Bone and one Flesh with an Harlot? God forbid. If Nature is uneasy under this Restraint, there is a Remedy provided; the Apostle tells us what it is, To avoid Fornication let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Husband. If they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge. Thus much for our

1 Thess.
4. 3, 4, 5.

1 Cor. 7. 2.

Heb. 13. 4.

first Enquiry: Let us proceed to the Second.

II. *What our Saviour has directed with regard to Divorce.*

Among the Political Laws, which Moses gave to the Jews for the Good-ordering of the Commonwealth, there was a *Permission* for any Man upon dislike of his Wife, to write her a Bill of Divorce, to put into her Hands, and send her out of his House. But this was by no means given them, as a *Moral Precept*: It was only a *Toleration* of a Practice, which seems to have obtained amongst them before; and because of the *hardness of their Hearts*, it was not thought fit to abridge them of it under the Discipline of the *Mosaical Law*, lest that stubborn, impatient and ill-natured People, if not allow'd to put away the Wives they hated, should abuse them, or should return to Idolatry, where they saw Divorce universally practised. But they were only obliged by Moses, to proceed in this Divorce with due Formalities of Law, which might prevent the Inconveniency of doing it rashly, and in a Passion. Now this, which was a *bare Permission* the Jewish School maintain'd, as a Practice *morally lawful*, and that it was no Sin in *foro Conscientie* and before God,

God, as well as not against their Civil Constitution. But our Saviour, in order to the restoring of the Seventh Commandment to its due and moral Perfection, recalls this Liberty here; and limits Divorce to the Case of Adultery. This is, in short, what our Lord has done with regard to Divorce: And having put an End to the Evil by his recalling of the Permission, there would be no need to enlarge farther upon this Paragraph, had not the Tempter here again interposed, and introduced an unjustifiable Practice, prevalent amongst us at this Day, of Mens *forfaking* their Wives, and Women their Husbands, to live *separately*, and this at the sole Pleasure of one of them, or by private Agreement of them both, without any *judicial Process*, or so much as Complaint before an Ecclesiastical Judge, whose Sentence, even in the Case of Adultery, is required before a Separation. And what is this, but a direct putting away our Wives, without so much as giving them a Bill of Divorce, and so indulging our selves in a Licentiousness, even unknown to the *Jews*. All the Difference that I see in it, is, that these disjoin'd Members have a Power of reuniting again, which the *Jews* had not; but if we consider, what use is generally
made

made of this, we shall find, that the forward Couple seldom meet again for the better, but for the worse; as if it was on Purpose to repeat the same sinful Act of Separation. It is no Excuse, that they remain single; I mean, that they do not offer to marry again so long as the forsaken Party lives; for such a *needless and illegal Separation*, is certainly of it self a very great Crime, tho' marrying again would make it greater, and tho' they have so much Religion, Honour, or regard to their Interest, as to abstain from Polygamy, they very much expose themselves to Temptations of Adultery; and indeed it is very hard for both Parties, who are known to live thus separate, to keep their *Reputations* clear with the World, for People will be apt to censure them, deservedly or not; because Separation does almost naturally produce Suspensions of this Kind; and Experience has shewn many of them to be too just. Beside, suppose a married Person, presuming upon his or her own Strength, resolves never so much before-hand, by a prudent and reserv'd Behaviour, to avoid all Temptations, and so live a chaste Life in a separate State; yet considering the Weakness of Human Nature, and the many Temptations to which such a Con-

dition

condition

dition of Life is obnoxious, this is an *unwarrantable Presumption*. And moreover, such a Person will be guilty of whatever Liberty the forsaken Party takes, who not being perhaps of the same Temper and Complexion, *cannot contain*, and yet is deprived of making use of the Remedy the Apostle prescribes in this Case. But whatever weight these Arguments may have, there is another I am sure that ought to be well considered, and that is the strict Union of Affections, implied in the very *Nature* of Marriage, and promised under the solemn Obligation of an *Oath*, both by the one and the other, at their Entrance upon that State: As to that strict Union of Affections, which I say is implied in the very Nature of Marriage, I know not how any Christian can desire it should be better proved or illustrated, than by considering, that our blessed Lord has made it the Figure or Representation of his Love to his Church; and unless we can suppose the Love of Christ to be a faint, an heartless, and inconstant Love, it must be very absurdly represented by any *slight* Affection. Marriage therefore, which is made an Emblem of this Love of Christ, could never give us any just and worthy Idea of it in its own Na-

Nature, if it did not imply such an exceeding great Affection, so strict, so indissoluble, as might render it in some measure fit for the Comparison. One would think, this should give Christians a stronger and a truer Notion of the Endearments, which ought to unite a Married Couple, than generally we find they have. But if these Deductions from Religion seem too Speculative to a carnal Mind, and want the Influence upon Practice, which might be expected from them; sure Principles of *Common Honesty*, strengthened with the *Obligation of an Oath*, may be supposed a proper Argument: I mean, that perpetual Union and Affection, which both Parties mutually engage themselves to at the Solemnization of their Marriage. The Promise is made in Words, as express as can be, to adhere to each other from that Day forward in all States and Conditions of Life, *for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health*, and under all these Suppositions, or whatever of this kind may happen, *still to love and to cherish so long as 'till Death* (which only shall dissolve the Union) *part them*. This is surely a very *positive* and *solemn* Promise, and made more Solemn by their joining Hands upon it in the Presence of the Church, or of

Wit.

Witnesses that represent the Church; and heighten'd also into a *formal Oath*, by being promised in the more especial Presence of God; as appears by the Place, or at least by the Religion of the whole Ceremony, and by the first Words that begin it, [*We are gathered together here in the sight of God*] and by the solemn Protestation upon putting on the Ring [*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen*] and by several other Passages throughout the whole Office, which must necessarily imply an Appeal to God upon the Truth and Sincerity of the Engagement; and this is the formal Nature of an *Oath*. Now upon this Consideration is it not easy to see, that whatever Couple thus joined together, *according to God's Holy Ordinance*, shall wilfully part from each other, and live in a State of Separation, or which soever of the Parties shall thus separate, tho' the other be unwilling, is guilty of a most notorious *Breach of Faith and Promise*, neither living together, nor loving as they engaged to do; and not only this, but of notorious *Perjury* also, in acting directly contrary to what they had promised *before God*, and with an awful Invocation of Him. 'Tis to be fear'd, that many of those who enter in-
to

to such an Engagement, are guilty of *extreme Inadvertency*, and *want of Consideration*. They don't attend to the Terms of the Contract, nor ever duly reflect upon the Extent of the Obligation; but look upon the whole Solemnity, as no more than a meer Formality, without which they cannot by Law attain the Ends they propose. Their End is Money-Advancement, or something else far short of what it should be, and their Right to these in such a Match, being confirmed to 'em by the Ceremony of joining Hands, &c. as the Law directs, 'tis all they think of, when they come to be so join'd. But this surely is a great and dangerous Profanation of that Ordinance; and the Case is still much worse, if they really do consider the strictness of their Contract, and yet intend within themselves never to be bound to perform it. For this is absolute Treachery, a most ungenerous and villanous Falshood, 'tis dealing as the Sons of *Jacob* did with the *Sichemites*, entring into a solemn Covenant, and under the shelter of Religion too to serve the Purposes only of an evil Mind. On the other Hand, I hope there are many, who enter into these Engagements with sincere and hearty Resolutions to act accordingly, tho' afterwards they

make

CHAP. IV. *Needless Separation.*

92

make or find themselves uneasy under them, and have therefore a Mind to part. But true Affection is not variable by every little Accident, nor totally to be destroy'd by a great One. If it be pretended, that the *Humours* of the Husband or Wife are intolerable, or the *Person disagreeable*, these Points should have been well considered *before* Marriage; for all after-Exceptions of this Kind, are guarded and protested against in those Words of the Contract [*for better for worse*] which signifie something to be sure, and what else can they signifie? The hazard of other Circumstances being provided for in the Words next following [*for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health*]. If *Danger of Life* be pleaded, or the *Sufferance of violent Injuries and Abuses*, yet is there no such Virtue as *Patience*, no such Duty as *Submission* to the Providence, and *Trust* in the Protection of God, required of us? And if they are, when must they be expected, when can they be exercised; but in a State of Suffering? But if a Remedy is to be sought for, all that can regularly be done, is first to see what the good Offices of private Friends can do, and if they fail, then to apply to the proper Court, and submit the Case to the Determination

tion of those whom the Law has appointed Judges therein. And still Separation, whether Legal or Illegal, is so bad a Remedy, that like desperate Medicines, it should not be so much as thought of, till all other Means have proved utterly incapable of Effect, and that they cannot possibly live any longer together. For to any good and discreet Person, such Separation must be so comfortable a State, attended with such danger of Ruin, both Temporal and Eternal, that all the Hardships which it is applied to cure, could scarcely make the Sufferer more uneasy or unhappy. But the Unconcernedness of many loose, unthinking People under it, as full of Mirth, and Air, and Jollity, as if no such Misfortune had happen'd to them, makes it too evident, that it is sometimes a State of *Choice*, more than of *Necessity*. And if this Practice goes on, perhaps in half an Age more, it will be thought needless so much as to pretend, or talk of such a formal Thing as a Reason for Parting; and Marriage will become of Course, no more than a Temporary Concubinage, that may be broke off at Pleasure with as much Freedom, as we change our Servants. The Laws indeed have hitherto secured the Continuance of

of the Marriage, by maintaining (in spite of any such Separation) the Validity of Jointures, Settlements, and other Civil Rights of it, but the Affection, Cohabitation, &c. which I beg leave to call the sacred Rights of Marriage (as being the Performance of what was solemnly vowed before God and the Congregation, when it was contracted) are even now by some People, broke through with as little Scruple, as if the Contract had been really made but for a Time. And tho' I will not charge our Laws with favouring this, any otherwise than by too general and dangerous a Connivance; yet I must say there is a Custom which directly encourages Separation, and therefore wants a full and positive Law to restrain it. I mean the scandalous Provision usually made before-hand, by Settlements or Marriage-Articles, for the Wife's separate Maintenance, in case her Husband and she should not think fit to live together. All such Provisions, call them by what Name you will, whether Pin-Money or any thing else, which serve, and are design'd to serve this Purpose, with whatever plausible Pretence they may be varnished over, I take to be of most pernicious Consequence, as providing for a Case, that ought not to be supposed amongst Christians, and putting

Gen. 3.
16.

a Couple in mind of parting from each other, even then, when they are going solemnly to contract for a strict Union, Affection, and Cohabitation during Life, and laying professedly a Scheme for their doing that with Convenience, which ought not to be done at all, and which with almost the same Breath they vow before God and the Congregation, that they will never do. Now what is all this, but a monstrous Absurdity in the very Nature of the Thing, a most notorious shuffling in the Accounts of common Honesty, and a most impudent Prevarication with God himself? What is it, but to empower and teach the Wife to disregard her Husband, and to loosen that Dependance, which by the Divine Law she should always have upon him; for such a Maintenance is secured to her, that she may carry well or ill to him, without danger to her Interest, and leave him when she pleases. And as to the real Influence of Mischief such Provisions may have had, I am satisfied, that many Separations would never have been thought of, if this Security given beforehand, had not encouraged and prepared the Way for them. But perhaps Pin-money, and the like Provisions beforehand for Dissertion with Convenience, being not
morally

morally evil, nor falling directly within the Letter of this Prohibition of Divorce, may be thought not to deserve so much Notice, in a short Summary of Christian Practice, as I have taken of them; but because our Saviour certainly designed here, to condemn every Thing that any ways promoted a Disunion after Marriage: I should not have been faithful to my Subject, if I had been less severe upon a Custom, which so much encourages a Wife upon the least dislike to leave her Husband; and the rather, because the Practice grows every Day more and more fashionable.





CHAP. V.

Of taking God's Name in vain.

MATT. V. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

*Again, ye have heard, That it hath been
said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not
forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto
the Lord thine Oaths.*

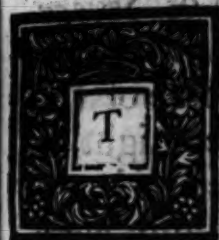
*But I say unto you, Swear not at all;
neither by Heaven, for it is God's
Throne:*

*Nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool:
neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City
of the great King.*

*Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head,
because thou canst not make one Hair
white or black.*

*But let your Communication be, yea, yea;
nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than
these, cometh of Evil.*

THE



THE Third Commandment,
*Thou shalt not take the Name
of the Lord thy God in
vain*, was understood by
the Jewish Doctors, as no
more than a Prohibition of

Perjury: And therefore as they taught,
the People took it, and looked no farther
for the Sense of the Precept, than this
short Paraphrase: *Thou shalt not forswear
thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord
thine Oaths*; which probably was their
allowed and common Gloss, established
by Authority in their Schools, and cited
as such by our blessed Saviour, who
(*'tis observable*) does not here repeat
the very Words of the Commandment,
as he had done those of the Sixth and
Seventh before, but their *Interpretation*
only; Because the Words of the Com-
mandment, as God had delivered them,
are so general, that *Perjury* is no more
expressed in them than *prophane Swear-
ing*; and as both are alike included and in-
tended, the one is as easily reducible as
the other, to the very Terms of the Law.
But it was *their Gloss*, that had injuri-
ously restrain'd those general Words, and
therefore our Saviour cites *that*, in order
to correct and supply the Defects of it.

Nor shall I need, in discoursing hereupon, to insist upon the Crime of *Swear-
ing falsely*, which was then, and always
has been (not only by the Force of this
Divine Precept, but by the Light of
Nature) acknowledged to be a grievous
Sin; as *Murder* and *Adultery* also were,
and for that Reason I forbore to enlarge
upon *them* in the foregoing Paragraphs.
For our Saviour left every Precept of the
Decalogue, in the same full Force and
Latitude, wherein it had ever been re-
ceived or interpreted by the *Jews*: But
where their Interpretation had too much
narrowed a Command, and straitned
the meaning of it, he enlarged it to its
due Perfection and Extent. His new
Explications therefore and Improvements,
are what I am properly to consider: And
what those are with regard to this Third
Commandment, will be the clearer, if
we suppose him only thus to have ex-
pressed himself.

“ Ye all acknowledge your selves ob-
“ liged in Conscience, by Authority of
“ the Third Commandment, to *swear*
“ *nothing falsely*, but to be *very sure of the*
“ *Truth*, and *very punctual in the Per-*
“ *formance* of whatever ye have sworn.
“ If due Care be taken of this, ye con-
“ clude the Law is strictly enough ob-
“ served,

CHAP. V. *Name in vain.* 103

“served, and fully satisfied. But, I
 “who come to declare to you the Di-
 “vine Will and Law more perfectly
 “than ye have yet been able to discern,
 “or willing to apprehend it, require of
 “you much more than this; that ye not
 “only swear not falsely, but not at all;
 “that in your common Conversation, ye,
 “upon no Account, and in no manner
 “or form of Speech, invoke the Sacred
 “Name of God, tho’ the Matter con-
 “cerning which ye have occasion to
 “speak be never so true. Nor yet think,
 “that the Sin of Swearing may be eva-
 “ded by indirect Oaths: For Swearing
 “by God’s Creatures, is in effect swear-
 “ing by him who created them, and
 “for whose Glory they are, and were crea-
 “ted. For Instance, Swearing by Hea-
 “ven, is swearing by him whose Throne
 “and Palace it is; and as the Splendor
 “of his Majesty shines chiefly there, so
 “do’s the Glory of his Providence in
 “this lower World; the whole Earth is
 “but one mighty Kingdom, under the
 “Inspection and Government of God,
 “and therefore he that swears by the
 “Earth, swears by that sovereign Pow-
 “er that form’d, supports, and governs
 “it. What has Jerusalem in it that is
 “venerable, but the Ark and Temple,

" the Signals of God's special Presence?
 " 'Tis this peculiar Relation to God, as
 " the Capital City of his Residence in
 " the Church, that stamps a sacred Cha-
 " racter upon it; and therefore whoso-
 " ever swears by *Jerusalem*, swears by
 " that great God, who has chosen to
 " place his Name and Worship there.
 " And the Case is still the same, when
 " ye swear by Creatures, which have
 " not that peculiar Sanctity and Relati-
 " on to God; as when ye swear by *your*
 " *own Heads*: For the Object of an Oath
 " must be some powerful Being; now
 " ye your selves cannot change the co-
 " lour of one Hair upon your Heads, and
 " therefore the Oath must be understood
 " to be by him that can, and that is no
 " other than God. If then ye have oc-
 " casion in your familiar Converse to af-
 " firm, or promise, or deny any Thing,
 " let a simple Affirmation, Assurance,
 " or Negation, suffice; 'tis enough to say
 " it is, or is not; shall be, or shall not be
 " so; for whatsoever is more than these,
 " is sinful.

The general Terms in which our Sa-
 viour has couched this Prohibition, *Swear*
not at all, &c. have occasioned some to
 imagine, that he prohibits, and con-
 demns therein, as unlawful, all man-

ner of Oaths, without Distinction; not only such as are rash, needless and prophane, but such also as are administered for the Peace and Good of Human Societies, the Security of Governments, and the judicial Discovery of Truth. But that this is an inconsiderate and erroneous extending of the Precept beyond the real Design, is evident, because an Oath religiously, and solemnly taken *in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteousness*, as the Prophet expresses it upon weighty Occasions, or for the Public Good, is an *Act of Divine Worship*, and the Name of God is *reverenced*, not profaned thereby. The Author to the *Hebrews* also acknowledges, that *an Oath for Confirmation is an end of all Strife*; and therefore surely Controversies may be determined by it, and cannot be determined any other Way more properly, or more effectually. The Apostles and Primitive Christians, never scrupled to take an Oath on such occasions as deserved it. Nay, our Saviour himself, who to be sure would not do any Thing unlawful, answered upon Oath, when it was required of him in the High-Priests Court of Judicature. All which being considered, I shall need to enlarge no farther against the Opinion of such Interpreters;

Jer. 4. 2.

Deut. 6.

13.

Deut. 10.

20.

Heb. 6.

16.

Matt. 26.

63, 64.

prefers: but proceed to shew, what Use of God's Name, or what sort of Swearing it is which is indeed forbidden (over and above the Case of Perjury) in this Third Commandment. And here is forbidden,

I. *All Swearing in common Conversation*; whether directly, by God, or by his Creatures; or indirectly, in any Terms whatsoever, which imply an Oath, and were only introduced to qualify the Harshness of it. That the Prohibition here is intended as a Restraint upon our ordinary Conversation, appears from these Words, *Let your COMMUNICATION be yea, yea; and nay, nay*: And that this Restraint is not laid without good Reason, will be plain, if we consider the *Nature of an Oath*, which is an Appeal for our Sincerity and Truth to some superior Being, that thoroughly knows our Consciences, and will certainly punish Falshood. Now this superior Being, how ever the Expression may disguise it, can be no other than God: And tho' such Oaths may be taken, when required by Authority, and then the Importance of the Affair makes them Acts of Justice and Duty, as in Form and Substance they are Acts of Religion; yet surely they are too solemn

solemn things to be prostituted to every trifling, and slight Occasion; and much more to a prophane and detestable Custom of filling up a Discourse with them upon no Occasion at all. Let the Matter we speak of be never so true, let our Intention in promising be never so honest and ingenuous, it is not fit that with such an insolent and saucy Freedom we should summon the Great God, whenever we please, to be a Witness of it. For as no private Man can of his own Authority slay a Malefactor, without sinning against the Sixth Commandment, and being guilty of Murder, so neither can he, but by the Command or Direction of the Magistrate, appeal to God as Witness of his Truth, without offending against this Third Commandment, and taking the Name of God in vain. Our Saviour therefore charges us to content our selves with barely affirming or denying in our Conversation, or however with repeating such Affirmation or Denial, by way of Assurance, that we really speak as we mean. For whatsoever is more than this, saith he, cometh of Evil; that is, (1.) From the Evil one, the Devil, that great Promoter of Wickedness: the Tongue that is exercised in Oaths and Curses, being set on Fire of Hell; and customary Swearing being

being so void of Temptation either from *Pleasure* or from *Profit* (and I may add from *Honour* too; for no Man generally meets with less Respect, or is hearken'd to with less Regard than a common Swearer) that it would be difficult to account for the Practice of so fruitless a Vice, if it did not proceed from the Instigation of a malicious Spirit, who tempts Men chiefly to those Sins that are most affronting to God. Or, (2.) This Expression [*cometh of Evil*] may signify that the very Use of an Oath, and all Occasions for it, proceeds from the *evil Practices* of *Falshood* and *Treachery*, so very common amongst Men: Or rather, (3.) That common Swearing proceeds from something *evil* and *sinful within our selves*, an evil Want of Reverence to God, and of a due Sense of Religion, or Consideration of what we say; an evil Affectation of conforming to the wicked Customs of our Company; or from a secret Distrust of our own Credit, as when Men are conscious they have ly'd themselves out of any reasonable Expectation to be believed, without giving the strongest Security for their Truth by swearing to it: For certainly continual Appeals of this kind must look as if the Swearer knew his Character and Veracity to be suspi-

suspicious. But in which way soever of all these, the Words be taken, it is apparently true, that Swearing in ordinary Conversation cometh of evil; and that methinks should be Reason enough against it. Let us only now take a short View of the several Kinds of Swearing here prohibited. As,

1. *Swearing directly by God, by Christ, or by the Holy Ghost*, under any of their Names or Titles, as, *Jehovah, the Lord, the Almighty, our Maker, Saviour*, and the like. For the Ground of the Commandment being the Reverence that is due to the Name of God, every Person in the Sacred Trinity is equally intituled to that Reverence, as God; and every Way of expressing or describing him is the Name of God, whereby we make him known, and therefore is to be revered. To this Head may be reduced the swearing by any thing which immediately relates to the great Work of our Redemption, as by the *Life, Death, Blood, or Wounds of Christ*, or by the *Sacrament*, wherein these awful Mysteries are solemnly represented, and Christ himself is spiritually present.

2. *Swearing by any Creature.* Now to swear by a Creature, is to swear by any *Angel*, by any *Saint*, by *Heaven*, by *Earth*,

Earth, or the like: And this, by our Saviour's express Doctrine, is swearing by God himself, in effect; for all these were created by him, depend entirely upon him, and are nothing at all without him. They have no Power of their own to do Justice upon such as swear falsely by them; whatever any of them can do is but as Instruments in the Hands of God, and therefore God must be supposed to be meant, when they are sworn by: or else in swearing by them, we set up *them* for Gods, by attributing a Divine Power to them, which is rank Idolatry. And so it is when Men swear by any of those Names the Heathens gave to what they worshipped. For, as I said before, the very Nature of an Oath implies, that such an Appeal is made to some superior and Almighty Being, which thoroughly knows our Consciences, and can and will reward our Falshood. But,

3. All such Expressions also are forbid, as do *covertly*, and with some *Disguise*, *Abbreviation*, or the like, *imply an Oath*, however qualified and soften'd, as, *God knows*, *Faith*, *egad*, and others, which the Wit, shall I say, or the Folly of Mankind, has contrived to evade a scandalous and barefaced Prophaneness. All these, and every Usage of this Kind, are but as so many

many trifling Methods to deceive our selves. Oaths they still are, and will without doubt be charged upon us accordingly at the Day of Judgment, being forbid, not only in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, but in other Places of the holy Scripture, as in that of St. James's *Jam. 5. 12.* Epistle, *Above all things, my Brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by ANY OTHER OATH: but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into Condemnation.* And thus much for the Sin of Swearing. Beside which we are forbid,

II. All using of the Name of God, or Christ, or Jesus, Lord or Saviour, in our ordinary Discourse, without a due and suitable Reverence, and a just Occasion. For as such a Reverence to the Name of God is the very Reason and Foundation of our Saviour's Precept against *Swearing* here, the same Reason equally affecting such a loose and careless Mention of it, as I am now describing, this also must be supposed to be equally forbidden thereby. 'Tis undoubtedly *taking* the Name of God in vain, and therefore falls within the very Letter of the Prohibition in the Third Commandment. If it be used in *Cursing*, there is not only *Prophaneness*, but

but a *desperate Malice* too, to encrease the Guilt; and it is justly accounted horrible to all religious Minds. But suppose it be not uttered in a Curse, the Prophaneness still is visible, whether it be by way of Exclamation, Admiration, or Expletive; as, *Good God! O my God! O Jesu! O Lord!* and many the like Expressions too frequently used; as if those venerable Names were fit only to fill up a Period, and to give an Air of Boldness and Impudence to our Conversation. Nor is the Case at all mended, when those Names are used in a way of rash and unconsidered Prayer; as, *God bless us, God be merciful, God save you, Lord have Mercy upon us, &c.* which very often occur in some Mens common Discourse, when there is no due Seriousness attends it, and probably no Thought at all of what is then desired by such a Prayer. And sometimes it comes in so *unseasonably* and *improperly*, having no Coherence at all with the rest of the Discourse, that it is downright *Nonsense*, as well as *Impiety*. Let those (if there be any such) that use this, and yet have that Regard to Religion which they pretend, consider, that their being *good Words* and *good Wishes* depends more upon their Sincerity and Devotion in uttering them, than

CHAP. V. *Name in vain.* 119

than upon the Mechanism of Syllables and a Sentence; and that all the Goodness that can be in the Expression it self, will never atone for the trifling Manner of using it: but it will still be *taking of God's Name in vain*, while we treat it with so little Solemnity, and throw up our Addresses to him at such an impertinent and thoughtless Rate. I will but just name a third thing naturally included in the Prohibition, *viz.*

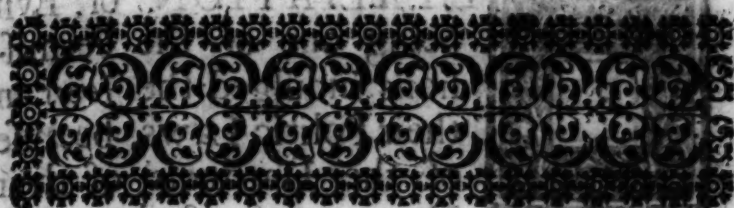
III. All *heedless, unattentive, and irreverent* taking even of *lawful Oaths* imposed by Authority. These Oaths, and of these especially such as are by way of *Qualification for an Office, or Obligation to discharge it well*, are for the most part look'd upon as meer Formalities in Law, and so the Religion of them is lost; and those that take them are gazing about the while, or thinking of other Matters, with no more Devotion and Concern than if they were hearing some idle Story, or repeating an ordinary Discourse. And the Case is not much better, in this regard, with Oaths of *Evidence*; those that take them are apt to consider them no farther than as solemn Promises to speak the Truth, not doing it with that awful Solemnity that becomes an *Appeal to the*

114 Of taking God's Name, &c. CHAP. V.

Great God, in what they say. But such a Behaviour is plainly *taking the Name of God in vain*, because they mention him and appeal to him without any Consideration to whom they are speaking, and perform what is in the very nature of a solemn Act of Worship and Religion, without that serious Sense of God, that ought to fill their Minds, and without that Reverence to his Name, which is the Foundation of the Third Commandment.



CHAP.



CHAP. VI.

Of FORGIVING of INJURIES.

MATT. V. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.

But I say unto you; that ye resist not Evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy Right Cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.



RETALIATION of Evil being one of the Permissions indulged the Jews in their Politic Laws, because of the Hardness of their Hearts, lest if they were not allowed this Liberty, under stated Rules, and by the Sentence of the Magistrate, they should in revenging themselves exceed all Bounds and Measures; our Saviour takes occasion from hence to lay down in this Paragraph the Duty of the *injured Party or Sufferer* (as he had before under Consideration of the Sixth Commandment that of the Aggressor) forbidding here all manner of private Revenge, or returning Evil for Evil; as tho' he had said,

“ The Judicial Law, it's true, allows
 “ of a Requital of Like for Like, that
 “ he who deprives his Brother of a Member, forfeit one of his own; as an Eye
 “ for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.
 “ But I charge you all, whoever will be
 “ my Disciples, that ye presume not to
 “ give your selves the ill-natured Satisfaction
 “ of rendering Evil for Evil, either
 “ in a public or a private way: but
 “ that rather than revenge *one* Injury ye
 “ suffer *two*. If any Man strike you,
 “ strike

"Strike him not again by way of Resent-
 "ment or Retaliation. And rather than
 "take the Advantage, which even *the*
 "*Laws* do give you for prosecuting upon
 "Wrongs of small Concern, or Impos-
 "sibilities of no great consequence, shew
 "your Adversary how little his Malice
 "or his Violence moves you, by being
 "forwarder to bear, than he is to inflict,
 "and ready to do more to gratify him
 "than he requires. If by contentious
 "Suits he extort from you what is really
 "your own, and what ye can really bear
 "the Loss of; let him take that, or more,
 "rather than contest it farther with him:
 "And if he will force you against your
 "own Convenience to go with him *one*
 "*Mile*, go with him *another*, rather
 "than passionately dispute your Liberty
 "in so small a matter. Say not this
 "Tamefulness is like to encourage him to
 "farther and greater Injuries; that is
 "more than ye are sure of. Meekness
 "and Complacency are the best Means
 "to soften an Enemy; but tho' he *should*
 "be so disingenuous, that ye have Rea-
 "son to fear the contrary, trust that to
 "the Providence of God, who is able to
 "preserve you, and will (without any
 "Interposition of yours) sufficiently a-
 "venge you. Nay, let the Injury be
 "I 3 " what

" what it will, be it ever so great and
 " unsupportable, never apply your selves
 " to Magistrates and Laws to *gratify a*
 " *revengeful Humour*; never prosecute
 " *merely for the sake of punishing*; but
 " either for the public Good (separate
 " from all Ends of private Passion) or to
 " obtain a *necessary Reparation* for the
 " *Damages* ye have *really received*. Nor
 " is this all, that ye abstain from return-
 " ing Evil for Evil; ye must even *relieve*
 " *the Necessities* of such an injurious Per-
 " son. If by his Circumstances he be
 " brought to beg of you, give him free-
 " ly and cheerfully; if he desire to bor-
 " row, refuse not to lend him; laying
 " aside all Grudges at the Evil he has
 " done you: for my Religion obliges
 " you to be charitable both to Friends
 " and Enemies.

I suppose in explaining of this Para-
 graph further there will be no need to
 prove here the *Lawfulness of Wars*, where-
 in the public Honour and Interest is con-
 cerned: Nor that the Prohibition does
 not extend to *Magistrates* punishing ill
 Men according to the Laws of their
 Country: for they are deputed by the
 Authority of God, to whom Vengeance
 belongs, to execute *Wrath upon him that*
does evil, and they are not to bear the
 Sword

Rom. 13.
 4.

Sword in vain. But that which seems in general to be the View of this whole Paragraph, is to restrain all personal Resentments and Revenges, and to inculcate, that we should not do an hard, a mischievous, or a vexatious thing to any one, because he hath done the like to us, where many times our own Good is not so much considered as the others Hurt; for the Word *anishava* signifies rather to oppose Evil to Evil, than to ward off an Injury. But there being four distinct Precepts or Directions included here, we will consider them severally.

I. The first is, what a Christian must do who is injured in his Person, by Blows, or Words of Contempt, expressed by striking on the one Cheek. Now the Laws of every Country taking cognizance of all Injuries betwixt Man and Man, that carry a real Damage along with them, and having provided such a Satisfaction proportionable, as shall restrain the Offender's Insolence, vindicate the Person wrong'd, and make up the Damage he has suffered; we are first to consider whether the Grievance we have to complain of, be such as the cool and unprejudiced Justice of those Laws have thought great enough to deserve a legal Remedy.

John 18.
22, 23.

If it be such, our Saviour does not here forbid us to apply to the Magistrate in Defence and Maintenance of our Right; for he himself, when he was injuriously stricken by the High Priest's Servant, protested in open Court against such Usage. But if it be so small an Injury, that the Laws have taken no notice of it, our Holy Master requires that we should rather *put it up*, than offer to revenge it. And tho' the Words are not to be taken in so strict and literal a Sense, as if we were bound industriously to give an insolent Offender Opportunities for a second Injury, and to solicit new Abuses from him: yet thus far we must extend the Precept, that no real or pretended *Fear* or *Probability* of his taking advantage, from our Patience under *one* Abuse to add *another*, should in any wise prompt us to Revenge and Retaliation. We must refer our selves to God, and bear with every thing that happens, rather than break through so plain, direct, and positive a Command as we have here, not to *return Evil for Evil*. This will doubtless be thought an *hard Saying*, by those who through a long indulged and humoured Tenderness for themselves, have wrought the Constitution of their Minds to such a Temper, they can bear nothing. But who

who can help it? Religion, as it proceeds from God, must be an *authoritative Rule*: our Passions therefore are entirely to be govern'd by it, and not that Rule bent to a Compliance with our Passions. 'Tis impossible to avoid reflecting here upon that most unchristian, barbarous, and senseless Practice of *Duelling*, whereby two Lives, or more, are staked by way of Satisfaction for Affronts, which not only a Disciple of Christ is bound to forgive; but even a prudent Heathen would think it below him to regard. The great Pretence is *Honour*, but the Notion of Honour wretchedly mistaken and abused. True Honour has by all wise Men been thought to consist in such a *Greatness of Mind*, as carries a Man above the Resentment of Contempts and Injuries. And certainly it requires a greater Share of Courage to *pass by* an Affront, than to *revenge* it, because the Difficulty is greater. Now the proper Object of Courage is Difficulty, as the proper Spring and Principle it issues from is Honour: and therefore the Conquest of a Man's Passions being harder, beyond Comparison, than the Indulgence of them, Courage is most shewn in such a Conquest, and that must be the truest Honour, that inspires with such a Courage; nor

can

can any thing be more opposite to both, than is that peevish Weakness, that is ruffled and discomposed at every Affront, and enslaves Men continually to their own Pride and other Mens Ill-nature. But beside this grand Mistake of the Duellist in his Notion of Honour and Courage, the Practice of such Men is as defective in *common Justice and Equity*: for what Proportion is there betwixt the trifling Injury that provokes them (too insignificant it seems for human Laws to take the Cognizance of) and the *Life of a Man*, in the Destruction, or at least in the Hazard of which they place their Satisfaction. Lastly, they consider not to *how little purpose* this wild Scheme of Satisfaction really serves. Their End must be either *Revenge, Reparation of the Damage received, or Defence of their Reputation*. If the *first*, 'tis the Revenge of a Mad-man, that will fire his Enemy's House the very next to him, which in all Probability will communicate the Flames to his own, and burn that too, or at least apparently endanger it. If *Reparation of the Damage* be aim'd at, or *Defence of Reputation*; suppose he kill his Enemy, what does he get by it? or how does that retrieve his Credit? Will that wash off the Aspersions, take off the Blow, or
 prove

prove the Lie to have been falsely given ? Not at all. His suffering by the Affront or Injury, is still just as great, as the Offender's Insolence left it. What I have hitherto said, are Arguments from Reason only, against such a Practice : And I might add, it were enough to restrain a good and wise Man from it, that thereby he acts contrary to the *Laws of the Land*, in defiance of the Government under which he lives, and is protected from whatever can reasonably be look'd upon as an Injury that deserves to have any Notice taken of it. But were this not so, and that no Arguments could be drawn from Reason or Human Laws against Duelling ; if it was really dishonourable not to fight ; if declining it would, as is sometimes objected, expose a Man to farther Abuses ; if Duels were not fought upon the account of such trifling Injuries, as generally they are ; if engaging in them would repair a Loss, or wipe off a Disgrace, or be indeed a suitable Revenge to a revengeful Temper ; yet surely there is something that with a Christian should outballance all, that Duelling is directly contrary to his Holy Profession, which requires Patience under Disgrace and Reproaches. And no Person deserves the Character of a Disciple

ciple of the suffering and forgiving *Jesus*, who acts so contrary to the whole Tenor of his Religion, and sacrilegiously usurps the Right of God, who has reserved the Power of Vengeance to himself, having said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.*

II. The second Precept, or Direction, concerning our Behaviour under Wrongs, is when we are injured in *our Properties*, when our Goods or Estates are taken from us either privately, or under colour of Law, expressed here by the *taking away of the Coat*. In this Case there is a greater Liberty of insisting upon Redress and Reparation, than in the former: the Courts of Justice are open, and the Authority of the Laws may be appeal'd to, and the Injurious be forc'd to Restitution. The Precept here is not against all going to Law: for Courts to determine Right of Property and Possession, as they are necessary, considering the Violence and rapacious Temper of some Men, and contribute very much to the good Order of the World, are doubtless agreeable in the Nature, Design, and Use of them, to the God of Order and Justice. And being so, perhaps it may be thought there is no great Danger in exceeding in the Use we make of them; for since we owe a Justice

to

to our selves and our Families, as well as to others; and since going to Law is a lawful Method of doing our selves Right; How (may some say) can any Man be to blame in taking all Advantages the Law will give him? But permit me the Liberty of answering in the Words of an Apostle, equally true of this as of what himself applies it to, *The Law is good, if a Man use it lawfully.* Christianity has⁸ directed certain Bounds and Rules of Moderation, which ought to be carefully observed in this Matter, or else our going to Law may be as great a Sin, as that Man's Injustice that gives occasion for it.

(1.) First then; let the Injury we have suffered, or the Right we sue for, be such as *is really of great moment to us*, and that not in our own Judgment only (for Pride or Covetousness may impose upon us when we make the Estimate our selves) but in the Judgment of some wise, good, and peaceable Neighbour, to whom we should discover freely our Design of going to Law, before we take one actual Step in it, together with the Reasons which we think make it necessary and fit for us so to do; and be ruled by his Opinion, whether it may be worth our while to proceed or not. For 'tis a Shame to Christianity, and even to the common Bonds

Bonds of Good Nature and Good Neighbourhood; that every trifling Damage, every pitiful Trespas, or every inconsiderable Demand, should presently create a Suit at Law. Let us remember that a Christian is obliged to be of a merciful and forgiving Temper, to study his own Peace, and the Peace of those about him, which he can never be said to do, while he is acted by such a litigious Spirit. I suppose the Precept of our Saviour here to be levelled especially at this very thing, *the going to Law upon trifling Occasions*, where the Injury or Loss is such as we can well bear, and is of little Consequence to our Fortunes or our Families. However this certainly is the least that can be meant by it; and therefore if his Authority have not Influence to over-rule us in so small a Matter, 'tis in vain to pretend to call ourselves the Disciples of Christ.

(2.) When we go to Law, even upon the most allowable Occasions, it must be *without any Malice or Desire of Revenge in the Heart*. How grievous soever the Wrong that has been done us is, whatever we have suffer'd or are like to suffer by it, be the Justice of our Demands and the Injustice of our Adversary's Refusal ever so great and apparent, let none of these things enflame us to a Thirst of return-

returning Evil for Evil, so as to make that in any measure the Principle we go upon in the Suit; remembering, that a Christian is not to use the Law purely to punish or to hurt his Adversary, but to do himself and his Family Justice.

(3.) We must take care during the whole Time the Contest is depending, and as well before it is commenced as after it is determined, that *our Behaviour towards him be with great Meekness and Civility*, by no means giving our selves a Loose of railing at him and speaking ill of him, affronting or insulting him the while, as many do, who weakly imagine that a Law-suit is Justification enough for all the ugly things they can say of an Adversary, or the Rudenesses they can shew to him. Nor is this all; we must be ready to believe the best of him, and willing, whenever he can be brought to it, to make up the Difference by the Arbitration of Friends, or any other easy Way, that may prevent the many Temptations to Evil, and the Inconveniencies on both Sides, which may be expected in continuing the Suit; choosing rather by such an Arbitration to recede a little from our Right, than obstinately to dispute it Inch by Inch with him, to the disturbance of Peace and Charity. But if such

an

an Agreement be rejected on *his* Side, and the Law takes its course, then,

(4.) When the Matter is brought to an Issue, and the Trial is over, we must be able to *sit down cool and contented, whatever the Determination be.* Submitting to the Loss of our Cause, if it be given against us, without vexationly carrying the Suit from Court to Court, in hopes at length to ruin an Adversary with the Expence, or weary him out with the trouble of Attendance. I do not say, that where there is evident Injustice done, Corruption of Witnesses, or bribing of Juries (not suspected only, but capable of sufficient Proof) and this such as unquestionably turn'd the Verdict *against*, which otherwise would have been *for us*. I do not say in these Cases, we are always bound to acquiesce (tho' if our Loss or Damage be tolerable, it may be our wisest Way) but that we may lawfully try our Right a second time, or (if it be of very great moment to us, and we have strong Presumption of Justice on our side) a third time, &c. But we must not do any thing like this for Contention-sake, and to be troublesome, from a proud Resentment of being cast, an obstinate Humour of Revenge, or a greedy Appetite of what we sue for.

These

These Rules are all necessary to be observed by every Christian who endeavours to right himself by Law, and perhaps the acquiring such a Temper as is requisite, may be a more difficult Task, and give a Man more Uneasiness than the Injury, and he might with less Trouble and less Danger sit down with the first Loss. These Considerations, if duly weighed, would, it is to be hop'd, cure many Christians of that Litigiousness, to which they are too much addicted, and which is certainly a very great Crime in them. Christians cannot well err on the other hand, in suffering themselves to be ill treated; but they may be too severe in their Exactions of Justice, in always insisting on the Letter of the Law.

III. The Third Precept or Direction concerning our Behaviour under Wrongs, is with respect to the Injuries received from Superiors, when a Man *abuses the Advantage he has over us by Strength or Power*, to force us to do what he has no Right to require of us; expressed here by *compelling us to go with him a Mile*. In this case our Saviour commands us not to be surly and inflexible, tenacious of every little Privilege or Exemption, which the Laws have given us from such Demands;

mands; but (if there be no moral Evil in the thing) to do what is required, or twice as much, for the sake of Peace, rather than tumultuously and clamorously to contest it. If to this it be objected, what then do the Protection of Laws, the Notion of Liberty, or the Favour of special Privileges, signify, if we must give them up to the Oppression of every insolent Invader? I answer, In this, as under the former Head of going to Law, we are not forbid to maintain our selves in such legal Advantages, as by the Judgment of wise and good Men, are of great Consequence either to our selves or to the Public. Our Saviour never intended hereby to set aside the Force of Laws; but what I presume he would have us to do by this Precept, is, that to Impositions of little moment, which are personal only, affecting our own private Liberty, and even these such tolerable Injuries, that they are rather a meer Breach of Privilege than any real or considerable Damage to us, we should patiently and calmly submit; the Breach of Charity and Peace being like to end in much worse Consequences than the Breach of such a Privilege.

IV. The

IV. The fourth Precept obliges us not only to that passive Disposition which has been described, excluding Resentment and Revenge, or requiring Patience and Submission under the Injustice of an Enemy, but that we should so perfectly set aside the Consideration of the Injuries he has done us, as to shew the same active Generosity in *doing good to him*, as to those who never gave us Provocation. We must do good to *all Men*, whether Friends or Enemies; or indifferent Persons; and this is here expressed by the two Instances of Giving and Lending. If he that has injured us fall into Poverty, and either need the Relief of Alms, or upon occasion, when it may be serviceable to him, be so far humbled, as to desire to borrow Money of us; we must give as freely to him what we can afford to give, and lend as freely to him what he would borrow, if we can spare it, as we would to any other indifferent Person; not daring to refuse, upon any Pique or Resentment against him for what has formerly pass'd between us. That this is the true Meaning of the Precept, as it stands in this Part of our Saviour's Sermon, I have no manner of doubt, nor can I better illustrate it than by these Verses from the

Epistle to the Romans, which inculcate the very same thing. *Dearly Beloved,*
 Rom. 12. *avenge not your selves, but rather give*
 19, 20, 21. *place unto Wrath; for it is written, Ven-*
geance is mine, I will repay, saith the
Lord. Therefore if thine Enemy hunger,
feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink:
for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire
on his Head. Be not overcome of Evil, but
overcome Evil with Good. As for the Ob-
jection from the Nature of Friendship, and
what Distinction the Gospel allows us to
make in favour of that, it will fall in to
be considered in the next Paragraph; as
what concerns in general the Duty of
Almsgiving will in that which follows it.



CHAP. VII.

Of the Loving of Enemies.

MATT. V. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

*Ye have heard, that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate
thine Enemy.*

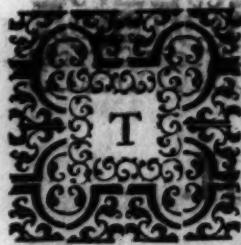
*But I say unto you, Love your Enemies,
bless them that curse you, do good to them
that hate you, and pray for them which
despitefully use you, and persecute you.*

*That ye may be the Children of your Father
which is in Heaven, for he maketh his
Sun to rise on the evil and on the good,
and sendeth Rain on the just, and on the
unjust.*

*For if ye love them which love you, what
reward have ye? Do not even the Pub-
licans the same.*

*And if ye salute your Brethren only, what
do you more than others? Do not even
the Publicans so?*

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.



THE foregoing Paragraph, it may be thought, has drawn out the Duty of *forgiving of Injuries* to a mighty Length: It obliges us to abstain from all Retaliations of Evil in private; it forbids all violent and angry Prosecutions in Courts of Law, and Justice; it charges us to run the hazard of Suffering many Injuries one after another, rather than fence our selves against them, by a Spirit of Revenge; nay, it enjoins us so far to forget the Evil that has been done us, as to relieve the injurious Person, if he should afterwards fall into Distress. One would be apt to think, that whosoever can do all this, acquits himself sufficiently as a generous Christian: And yet there is something more and higher expected from us, which the present Paragraph requires. 'Tis not enough, it seems, that we forget *what is past*, and be ready to do good to an Adversary *hereafter*, as it may lie in our Way: But even now, while the Injury is a doing, while his Malice has us actually in chase, while our good Name lies bleeding fresh by his
vile

vile and venomous Reflections, and we are suffering every Day by all the Mischiefs he can do to our other Interests; nay, and if his Power and Cruelty extend so far, even while our Bodies are tormented, or our Lives expiring by them; we must love and bless him, pray for him, and do him Good; and this is the true Standard of a Christians Perfection in Charity. Our Saviour takes occasion the rather to urge this, because of a popular and prevailing Error amongst the Jews, who having read that their Ancestors were commissioned by God, as Ministers of his Justice, utterly to destroy the seven Nations, that possessed the Land of Canaan before them; to blot out the Remembrance of *Amalek* under Heaven, and were discharged from seeking the Peace and Prosperity of the *Ammonites*, and the *Moabites* considered not that these were special Cases, fixed by the Divine Command, and grounded upon Reasons both of State and Religion; but drew an Inference very falsely from them to their own private and personal Quarrels, and advanced it into a Maxim, that tho' in general, they were to love their Neighbours, yet they not only might, but ought to hate their Enemies, especially such as were Enemies to their Law

Deut. 7.

12, &c.

Deut. 25.

19.

Deut. 23.

3, 4.

and Worship. This their Doctors taught with much Assurance, and the People received it with a malicious Readiness, as being naturally violent and revengeful. But our Saviour here corrects their Mistake; and requires his Followers, on the contrary, to behave themselves with the greatest Meekness and Beneficence to all that injure them, to pray for their Enemies Conversion, and to do them Good, even tho' they are despitefully abused, and persecuted by them at that Instant, whether for Religion, or for any private or personal Cause.

“ Ye know (says he) that by the
 “ Law, ye are commanded to love your
 “ Neighbours, a Word, which in its due
 “ Extent and Latitude comprises all Man-
 “ kind, and all Mankind in general is
 “ really intended in it. But your Do-
 “ ctors have distinguished away the Force
 “ of the Precept, and narrowed the Sig-
 “ nification of the Word, to a Fellow-
 “ ship in the same Religion, Civil Poli-
 “ ty, or private Friendships, and in this
 “ Sense teaching you to love your Neigh-
 “ bours, have falsely form'd an Antithe-
 “ sis, that you may hate your Enemy.
 “ On the contrary, I tell you, that even
 “ the worst Enemy ye have is your Neigh-
 “ bour, and whatever his Religion, his
 “ Coun-

“Country, or his Usage of you be, ye
“are bound to love him, even at the
“Time that he is most injurious and
“abusive. Does he curse, or rail at
“you, and speak Evil of you? Do ye
“in return wish well to him, and say
“all that ye can justly say in Commen-
“dation of him. Does he pursue you
“with implacable Hatred, is he daily
“doing you all the Mischief in his Pow-
“er, or does he persecute you for the
“Testimony of a good Conscience, with
“all the Fury and Cruelty that Hell
“can inspire? Do all the personal good
“Offices ye can to him upon all Occa-
“sions; contrive to benefit him, as he
“does to injure you; pray earnestly and
“every Day to God for his good Estate in
“this World, and such a thorough Con-
“version as may bring him happily to
“the next. By this ye will manifest
“your selves to be the Sons of God,
“whose Providence is equally exerci-
“sed over all his Creatures, not diffe-
“rencing in this present State of Things,
“the Righteous from the Wicked, but
“making his Sun to shine on the Evil and
“on the Good, and sending Rain on the
“Just and on the Unjust. For if your
“Love reaches only to your Friends, to
“those who are, or may be beneficial
“to

“ to you, what Reward can ye expect
 “ for this? Nature and Self-Interest
 “ prompt you to it, and even the Pub-
 “ lican ye so much despise, can practise
 “ it. And if ye be only respectful to
 “ those of your own Family or Neigh-
 “ bourhood, common Civility and good
 “ Manners oblige to this, and it is no
 “ more than the worst of Men attain.
 “ But I would have you Christians, who
 “ are the Sons of God by Adoption, to
 “ imitate your Heavenly Father in a
 “ more extended Charity and universal
 “ Benevolence.

Our blessed Saviour here not only gives
 his Disciples the true Meaning of that
 Precept, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour
 as thy self*, extending Neighbourhood to
 all the World, and Love to the most ex-
 alted Degrees of Kindness; but what
 we may observe to be usual with him,
 when the Duty goes much against the
 grain of human Nature, and the com-
 mon Practice of Mankind (as in this of
 loving our Enemies, and in that of
 not laying up Treasures upon Earth)
 he condescends to give Reasons for our
 Obedience, from the Usefulness and Ex-
 cellence of what is commanded. Let us
 therefore consider,

I. The

I. The Duty it self of Loving our Enemies.

II. The Motives and Arguments by which our Lord has condescended, to urge and encourage us thereto.

I. The Duty it self of Loving our Enemies. The meaning of the Word Love, in this Place, is best explain'd by our Saviour himself; in those Three Instances of Friendship and Affection, *Blessing, doing good, and praying for them*, as the contrary Instances of *cursing, hating, and despitefully using and persecuting*, explain what is here to be understood by an Enemy.

(1.) First then, We are obliged to bless them, the Word used here is *ευλογεῖτε*, which implies both the *speaking them civilly to their Faces, and speaking well of them behind their Backs*. Tho' they reproach, revile and slander us, treat us when present with the most contemptuous and insulting, the most scurrilous and bitter Language; and when we are absent, make it their Business daily to lessen and defame us, and to say all the ill Things of us, they can either hear, imagine, or invent: Our Conduct is to be directly

directly the Reverse of this; we must answer them in the most civil and courteous, the most obliging and good natured Terms; and when-ever we have occasion to speak of them in Company, we must labour to conceal their Faults, where Charity and Justice do not require us to discover them, we must put the best Construction upon their Actions, and the fairest Gloss upon their Characters that they will reasonably bear, and we must on all Occasions be ready to publish whatever in them is vertuous and commendable.

(2.) The Second Instance, *Doing good*, is of a mighty Latitude. It extends as far, and shows it self in as many Forms, as the Necessities of our indigent Life, and the Troubles of our uncertain State, as far as all that our Enemies can possibly suffer, all that they can stand in need of, all that we can do to help and to relieve them, and all the Benefits they are capable of receiving, either with regard to Soul, Body, or Estate. Tho' they are daily contriving new Injuries, or repeating old Ones, and doing us all the Mischief in their Power; yet we must act a contrary, and a better Part towards *them*, by all such Acts of Charity, as suit best with their present Circumstances and

Con-

Condition, relieving them in Want, comforting them in Affliction, assisting them in their Difficulties; and if they will admit of it, advising them in their Affairs, reproving them for their Sins, admonishing them of their Duty, in such a way as may be likeliest to have a good Effect upon them. And in short, we must be ready always to do for them, whatever may be really of Advantage, to the forwarding of their temporal or eternal Happiness.

(3.) By the Third Instance, we are taught to *pray for them* also, even for those that bitterly malign and persecute us. What Help we cannot give them ourselves, we must sincerely and fervently pray God to give them, recommending them to his infinite Power, and infinite Compassion to restore their Health, relieve their Wants, and bless them with all needful Blessings: As *David* did for *Psalm 35.* his Enemies, who when they were sick,^{13.} *cloathed himself with Sack-cloath, and humbled his Soul with Fasting, and prayed for them, tho' his Prayer returned into his own Bosom.* But especially recommending them to the *Grace and Mercy* of God, that he would never revenge upon them the Injuries they have done us. *Father, forgive them, for they know not*

not what they do; as the greatest of Sufferers prayed for those who were then abusing and murdering him with the greatest Insolence and Cruelty; setting us hereby an illustrious Example of that perfect Charity he requires. We should beseech God, by the Power of his Holy Spirit, so to awaken their Consciences, and so to improve their Convictions, that they may be brought to a true and effectual Repentance for all their Sins, that a thorough Conversion to God and Goodness may be wrought in them, and their Souls may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. All this is imply'd in the Word *Love*, and is a Christian Duty from which no one, who pretends to be a Disciple of our charitable Lord and Master, can hope to be excused: For no less than this brotherly Affection for all Mankind, be they never so injurious, will be accepted by him. But perhaps it may be objected, that if this extensive Affection be due to my *Enemies*, there will be no room for any Distinction in favour of my *Friends*. If I am bound to do all the good Offices I can for *them*, what is there I can do more for *these*? I answer, that tho' by Christian Principles, *Friendship*, as a Duty, is extended to all Mankind, even to those that hate and injure

us, as well as to those that do us Good, and our Religion (now) calls it Charity; yet *particular* and *special* Friendship, the Loving of one Person more than another, which induces a *voluntary additional* Obligation, and is one of the greatest Comforts of Society, is doubtless still as lawful, and as commendable as ever. I need go no farther for an Instance, that will thoroughly justify this, than our Lord himself; who tho' he was continually instructing, warning, admonishing, healing, and doing Good to an ungrateful and malicious People, and tho' he purposely came into the World to *die for* his Enemies, which is the strongest Effort of Love that can be made even to our dearest Friends, had nevertheless his twelve Select Disciples with whom he conversed more intimately, and taught with greater Diligence and Freedom, and prayed for in a particular Manner, with more than ordinary Tenderness and Concern. And even in *that* Number, Three of them were singled out for special Confidences and Favours. And even of these Three, St. *John* is eminently distinguished, as the Disciple whom he loved, his Bosom Friend; no doubt therefore, our Religion, notwithstanding the extensive Charity

Rom. 5.

10.

John 15.

13.

Mark 4.

33, 34.

John 17.

Mat. 17.

1, 2.

Mark 5.

37.

Mark 14.

33.

John 13.

23.

John 21.

20.

rity it requires, has left us room enough for particular Friendships. And if it be still ask'd, what these particular Friendships can imply, and suppose, beyond what is included in that Charity? I answer, that such a Friendship consists in three Things: The doing of *real Benefits and good Offices*, the Distinctions of *special Honour and Esteem*, and the particular *Freedom and Intimacy of Conversation*. Now real Benefits are either such as are *necessary*, as relieving the wants of People, assisting them in Distress, praying heartily for them, admonishing for the good of their Souls, doing Justice to what is commendable in them, and shewing a *Tenderness* to the rest of their Character; those I confess are Benefits promiscuously due to all Mankind, whether Friends, Enemies, or indifferent Persons, according to the Knowledge we have of their *Necessities*, and to our own Ability of serving them: Yet even here, in *some of these*, where it may so happen, that a *particular Friend* may need and require our help at the same time, an indifferent Person or an Enemy do's; and *we cannot relieve, or do service to them all*. I question not but we may prefer the Service of *our Friend*; and that, because there is another Moral Duty, called *Gratitude*, which in his Case throws

throws an additional Weight into the Scale. Or farther, Benefits may be such as are not strictly necessary, but *voluntary*; and, if I may call them so, *redundant*: Now these I may reserve for my *Friend*. For tho' I am bound to relieve an Enemy, if I can, when he is in want; &c. I am not bound to make him extraordinary Presents, to sollicite extraordinary Advantages and Preferments for him, to leave him Legacies, or make him my Heir, and the like. Again, the *two last* constituent Parts of Friendship, which I mentioned, are peculiar to it; an Enemy cannot claim them. As Friendship ought to be founded on Vertue, built up by good Offices, and strengthened by a grateful Sense of them, the *Distinctions of special Honour and Esteem* are due to it, not meerly, because *we love*, but because the Vertue and Merit of our Friend *deserve to be distinguished*, and his particular Regard to us ought in Justice to be returned. And lastly, the *Freedom and Intimacy of Conversation*, is what the Scripture no where requires us to use, with either a known or a suspected Enemy. This is entirely sacred to Friendship: So says our Saviour to his Apostles, *I have* ^{John 15.} *called you Friends; for all Things which I have heard of my Father, I have made*

known unto you. And indeed, to disclose to an Enemy our inmost Thoughts and Purposes, and the Secrets of our Affairs, would only enable him to do us the more effectual Mischiefs; whereas Religion was never design'd to overthrow common Prudence. I hope the Objection is by this Time sufficiently answered, and Charity to our Enemies shewn to be consistent enough, with a particular and distinguishing Favour to our Friends. And now, since the Practice of such a Love to those that hate and injure us, as is here required, may seem very difficult to Human Nature; Let us see,

II. The Motives and Arguments by which our Lord has condescended to urge and encourage us thereto.

(1.) The first is, that hereby we prove *our selves to be the Children of God*, who dispenses the necessary Benefits of Life with a promiscuous Bounty, gives out the Light and Warmth of the Sun to cherish the Persons, and direct the Affairs, not only of those that love and serve him, but of the unthankful and rebellious also, and sends his Showers to enrich and bless the Lands not only of the Good, who employ the Fruits of them to his Glory, and the Relief of others; but of the worst of Men,

Men, who turn his Grace into Lasciviousness, pervert his Benefits to Luxury, and the Riches he bestows upon them to Oppression and Injustice. Now, if our heavenly Father is thus daily kind to those that are daily provoking, and perhaps blaspheming him, no Argument can be stronger than this, to all who have a right Notion, what an Honour it is to be esteem'd the Children of God, and who consider that Imitation is the most natural Evidence, that they stand so related to him. For Children are apt to imitate their Parents, in whatever they observe in them, especially, what is most remarkable and conspicuous; and shall not we then endeavour to resemble our Heavenly Father in one of his chiefest Properties, that of doing Good to the greatest Offenders. By such a Love to our Enemies, as his Example has traced out to us, we should be best able to satisfy our selves, and to convince the World, that we are the Children of him, whose infinite Goodness we endeavour to express in our Behaviour, tho' in Degrees far short of it, and with much of childish Imperfection: And as this Attribute is, that which of all others renders the Divine Being it self most amiable:

able: A Resemblance of it in us would be most to our Praise and Honour.

(2.) A Second Argument is from the *Reward which Christians expect*. It is but reasonable, that since Christ assures us of Eternal Happiness upon our Obedience, that we should be willing to obey his Commands, how disagreeable soever they may be to our corrupt Natures: For surely we who live under more glorious Promises and Hopes, should be ready to do more than those, who have no such Expectation. If our Love to those about us be only a return for Favours received, or to oblige them to farther Kindnesses, 'tis mean and mercenary, we have had our Reward here, and what can we expect hereafter? In Truth, a due Observance of the other Laws of Christianity, such as Humility, and a low esteem of the Treasures of this World, would make the Hove of our Enemies, which seems so difficult a Duty, more easy: For Pride and Covetousness are the great Obstructions to the Practice of this Love, by raising in us false Notions of Honour and Self-Interest, and so making us to look upon the Duty as too severe, when all the Difficulty proceeds from those Passions, which ought to be subdued and kept under.

(3.) Ano-

(3.) Another Argument is from the *Practice of the Publicans*, who in the Esteem of the *Jews*, were the worst of Men, yet even these knew how to be kind and courteous to their Friends, their Neighbours, or their Kindred; and if our Love extends no farther, it is a Sign, that it proceeds not from a *Principle of Religion*, but from the meer Force of *natural Civility*, or from the *Mechanism of Education*. For certainly, Nature, good Breeding or Interest, may have Power enough over those, who make no Pretensions to Religion, to oblige them to return a Courtesy or a Complement, whoever it is that gives it, whether a Friend or an Enemy; to salute those that salute them, nay, and often (as Occasion makes it necessary) to treat with abundance of good Words and outward Candour, those whom they really hate, and who they know hate *them*. But nothing less than a Sense of Duty and Obligations from *Religion*, can ever carry a Man so far as to *love an Enemy* in good earnest, and not only to speak him fair, but to demonstrate his Sincerity, by a constant Readiness to do him Service, an uniform Generosity of Carriage and Behaviour towards him. By this therefore we must distinguish

our selves as *Christians*, under the Power of spiritual Principles and heavenly Grace; which will enable to perform what Nature, Worldly Policy, or Custom can never reach to.

Our Saviour concludes all with this Exhortation; *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*: And a very proper Conclusion it is, both with Respect to this particular sublime Duty, of Loving our Enemies, and to the rest of the Improvements of the Decalogue, which went before. It's true, no Man *can be perfect, as God is perfect*. I mean as to the *Degree*, because God is infinitely so, and therefore it may look as if Christ commanded an impossible Thing, but that Perfection which the Gospel requires is a *most earnest and diligent Endeavour after Goodness, especially Charity*: And this is certainly, in our Power. We must strive to resemble the infinite Goodness, *as far as we are able*, and that because of the Relation Christians bear to their Heavenly Father, by Regeneration and Adoption; *They are the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus*; and therefore must put on his Nature by a Transformation of their own,

Gal. 3.
26.

CHAP. VII. of Enemies.

151

own, into as near a Similitude to his in every Perfection as is possible, especially in that of Love: For so says St. John,^{1 John 4} Let us love one another: For Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.

CHAP. VIII.



L 4 CHAP.

ni sid ot ehtilim2 s reon as omi ,awo



CHAP. VIII.

Of Almsgiving.

MATT. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Take heed that ye do not your Alms before Men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no Reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

Therefore, when thou dost thine Alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee, as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues, and in the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men. Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward.

But when thou dost Alms, let not thy left Hand know what thy right Hand doth:

That thine Alms may be in secret: And thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

OUR



OUR Lord having in the foregoing Paragraphs corrected certain Errors in the *Jewish* Explications of the Decalogue, and some other popular Mistakes among them, the clearing of which was requisite to the instructing his Disciples rightly in his own Religion, he proceeds now to give some Cautions for the better Performance of the three great Duties, as they are esteem'd in most Religions (and particularly were so in that of the *Jews*) *Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting.* This Paragraph is about Almsgiving; and the Caution is, that we should not do it out of Ostentation, which in other Words, would be to this Effect,

“ Whatever others do, I would have
“ you, my Disciples, when ye bestow a
“ Gift on any poor Man, to be very
“ careful, that ye do it not out of a vain
“ Desire of being applauded for your
“ Charity: For if this be your Design,
“ ye have received your Reward already
“ in that Applause, and must expect
“ none hereafter in the Kingdom of
“ Heaven: Therefore chuse not public
“ Places, as the Hypocrites do, for Dis-
“ tributions of your Charity, as if ye
“ were

“ were rather marketting for Fame and
 “ Reputation, than discharging a good
 “ Conscience towards God, and Kind-
 “ nefs to the Poor; or as if your Vertue
 “ would be wholly lost, if the Parade
 “ and Pomp of it, did not draw an ad-
 “ miring Croud about you. On the
 “ contrary, be ye so afraid of deceiving
 “ your selves by a Vanity of this Na-
 “ ture, as to chuse the *most retired Pla-*
 “ *ces*, where ye may bestow your Alms
 “ with the greatest Secrecy, except,
 “ when ye may reasonably hope to do
 “ Good by your Example, and *that* be
 “ the true Reason of your appearing.
 “ And God, who knows the secret
 “ Thoughts of your Hearts, and the Prin-
 “ ciple and Design of your Actions, will
 “ certainly at the great Day of Account,
 “ reward you openly before Angels and
 “ Men, so that ye shall by no Means
 “ lose the Credit of your good Works,
 “ by denying your selves the seeking of
 “ that Praise from Men, but shall re-
 “ ceive the Honour of it, with more la-
 “ sting and substantial Glory, from the
 “ unerring Mouth of God.

Now Almsgiving, tho' not expressly
 commanded in this Paragraph, is yet by
 our Saviour's Caution for the right Per-
 formance of it, supposed to be a Chri-
 stian

stian Duty. My Business therefore must be to explain,

I. What it is that Christians are obliged to do in general, with regard to Almsgiving.

II. The true Meaning of this particular Caution, of not doing it before Men, to be seen of them.

I. *What it is that Christians are obliged to do, with regard to Almsgiving.* And this will best be done, by considering, (1.) To what Persons we are to give. (2.) What, or how much. (3.) When, or at what Time.

(1.) I begin with the first, where I am to shew, to *what Persons* we ought to give. And these no doubt are properly those who are *in want*, and are *not able to help themselves*. If they can do this, tho' they be in want, 'twere better even for themselves, as well as for the public Good, that they are left to their own Industry, than suffered to prey upon the Fruits of other Mens Labours, while they indulge themselves in Sloth and Idleness: For Idleness is the greatest Corrupter both of Body and Mind, an Enemy to the Health, a certain Fixer of Poverty, when Men are once fall'n into it,

it, as well as the usual Cause and Occasion of falling into Poverty; the Seed-plot of many Misfortunes, the Parent of many Vices, and the Spring of several public and mischievous Crimes, the Pest of a Common-wealth, and what apparently tends to its Decay and Ruin. In Consideration of which Evils, the A-

2 Thes. 3. 10. *postle St. Paul wrote thus to the Thes-
salonians, For even when we were with
you, this we commanded you, that if any
Man would not work, neither should he eat.
And afterwards speaking to such as these,
Ver. 12. he says, Now them that are such, we com-
mand and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ,
that with quietness they work, and eat
their own Bread.*

The proper Objects of Charity, therefore are poor, helpless Orphans and Widows, such sick, and aged, and decayed Persons, as are not able to help themselves; to assist these is a singular Piece of Charity, and this Charity an eminent Part of Christianity, a pure and undefiled Religion. For so St. James 1. 27. *James hath told us, Pure Religion and
undefiled before God and the Father, is
this, to visit the Fatherless, and Widows
in their Affliction, viz. to comfort, sup-
port and relieve them in the Affliction
they labour under. But as those who
are unable to help themselves are the
proper*

proper Objects of Compassion, and to be relieved on that Account; so are there certain other Circumstances to be considered in this Case, as requiring a more especial Charity.

As first of all, if the Person fell into Want and Poverty, not by his own Neglect or Vices, not by Idleness or Debauchery, but by Calamities either in his Body or Estate, which it was not in his Power to prevent: This Case requires an especial Favour. Here God in the way of his Providence prepares an Object for our Charity, and therefore no doubt requires a freer Exercise of it, than where a Man makes himself so by that which God forbids, by Idleness, Luxury, and Excess.

And then again another Circumstance, which commands a more especial Charity, is, where the Person is a Christian, and that not only in Profession, but in Practice too. And this is that which St. Paul considered, *As we have there- Gal. 6. fore Opportunity, let us do good unto all¹⁰ Men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith.* There is a Charity due to all who stand in need of our Assistance, but more especially due to them who make Profession of Christianity, as being Fellow-members with us, of the Body

Body of Christ, and Heirs of the same Glory that we our selves expect from him, and therefore spiritually related to us, and more particularly dear to Christ himself, and therefore worthy of more Regard, where other Circumstances are alike, than those that have not so much of the Divine Image upon them, and of his Grace in them.

Add hereunto a Third Circumstance, that ought to recommend a poor Person to our especial Consideration; namely, natural Kindred and Relation to us. For as the proper Rule of Charity, first requires a Provision for a Man's own Family; in so much, that *He is worse than an Infidel, who provides not for them of his own House*; So the next Care, it requires, is of the Branches of the same House. But here observe, that I speak of the Matter of Charity only; for as to public Places and Offices in Church or State, no doubt, but a fit and able Person is to be preferr'd before a Relative; because public Offices are designed for public Advantage, and therefore the best qualified are to be chosen without Regard to Blood and Affinity, unless a near Relation be equally fit, or at least sufficiently and duly qualified; and this may suffice to shew the properest Objects of

1 Tim. 5.
8.

of our Charity. Proceed we now to the

(2.) Second Point, which is, *how much* we ought to give: And here the general Rule is, that we give according to the wants of others, considered together with our own Ability. Where I shall lay down these two Rules, *First*, That we are not so to give, as to exhaust the very Fountain. But yet, *Secondly*, That we are obliged to give liberally, with regard to our Estates and Power.

First, We are not so to give, as to exhaust the very Fountain, to disable our selves from being in a Capacity of giving more. For if to give, be to do a good Action highly acceptable to God, and agreeable to our own Minds; is it not absurd and childish, by an over forward Zeal, to run our selves out of Breath for it; and out of mere eagerness of the Duty, to destroy our own Capacity of performing it? Besides, were there any Obligation upon us from God to break our Estates into pieces, and to distribute them to the Poor, how would it consist with the other Obligations, which he has certainly laid us under, of providing for our Families, according to the Degree we are placed in? Or suppose, there were no Families to be taken care of, what would

would be the Issue of such an extravagant Bounty, but a vain and useless Reciprocation? For when I had by this means made my self Poor, another must put himself into the like Circumstances to enrich me, and so on in an endless Circle of Change and Confusion, to no manner of Purpose. For tho' our Lord required a certain young Man to sell all he had, and to give to the Poor, and to follow him (who no doubt would have provided for him, had he complied with that Command) the Precept there was only a Trial, whether his forward Client could find in his Heart, or not, to quit all his worldly Possessions for the sake of Religion, if Times should come that might make it necessary, as afterwards the Times of Persecution did. So that it implies no more to us in general, than that whosoever will be a Christian in earnest, must sit so loose to all the Enjoyments in this World, as to be sincerely ready and willing to part with them, how great, how dear soever, when they cannot be kept without quitting his Religion and a good Conscience. But no part of the Scripture, that I know of, obliges us by any standing Law to part with all we have in Charity to others, and thereby reduce our selves to want.

Yet

Yet, *Secondly*, There is no doubt, but that every Man ought to give *Liberally*, with respect to what Estate he hath. This is suggested in the Words, *Give* Luke 16. *Alms of such Things as ye have.* Tho' ye ^{41.} have neither Silver nor Gold to give, yet give of such Things as ye have. From whence it appears, that there is a Bounty demanded even from meaner Persons, a Liberality required in them; and much more from those of Fortunes or Estates. But that which does most effectually shew, that God requires us to give liberally, is, that the Reward of Charity shall rise in Proportion to the Generosity and Greatness of it. So St. Paul tells ² Cor. 9. us, *He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully.* To the same Purpose is the Exhortation that follows, *Every Man according as he purposeth in his Heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of Necessity: For God loveth a cheerful Giver.* God requires that we give with free and cheerful Minds, and therefore hath not punctually determined the very Sums, or the strict Proportion to be given, but left that loose and unsettled; that there may be room to shew our Liberality. But I have said enough of this Head, to make way for the

(3.) Last Point, *When* we ought to give. The Resolution is, that we are obliged then to give, when Christian Prudence shall determine, that it is most seasonable so to do. And tho' I will not say, that it is always, in all Cases, in all Circumstances to be our Rule, to give *speedily*, and *without delay*; yet it is generally so, and that for Two very good Reasons.

First, Because it is best to give, while we have Opportunity and Ability so to do, both which may fail us afterwards, although we have them at present. We may be surpris'd by sudden Death, and so deprived of the Opportunity of doing the Good we had designed; and likewise of the Reward thereof, if our Delay in so doing, proceed from any unwillingness to the Duty, as probably enough it did. And then again, we know not how our Estates may vary, what Changes may possibly come upon us, and therefore 'tis prudent to do good, while it is in the Power of our Hand to do it.

But, *Secondly*, Another Reason that may press the quick and speedy Relief of those who want, is, that the delay of so doing, continues them under their Fears and Grievs, their Wants and Miseries; and it must be a mighty Cause, which

which can excuse the delay of Relief in this Case, and much more justifie it. And therefore, the longer we needlessly delay to relieve them, after we are convinced, or may be so, if we please, of their Necessity, the more we shall expose our selves, to be answerable for what they suffer in the mean Time; and let it be remembred, that God who will be the Judge both of their Necessities and our Charity, knows the Hearts of Men, and all the several Shifts and Fallacies, whereby they are wont to deceive themselves in the Delays of doing Good.

II. I am now to explain the true meaning of this particular Caution, of not doing our Alms before Men, to be seen of them. And this will best be done, by considering; (1.) How, or in what manner, we must give our Alms. (2.) With what Designs or Ends.

(1.) I shall begin with the first, *how*, or *in what manner*, we must give our Alms. Sometimes it must be done with all the *Privacy* that is possible, and that both for their sakes to whom we give, and for our own likewise. *For their sakes*, in compliance with their Modesty and Reputation (especially, when they are such, whose Quality and Education has

M 2

been

been above the common Rank) lest we do a Prejudice to their Credit, while we do a Charity to their Persons, and spoil the Comfort which our Gift would afford them, by mingling a Disgrace with it, and make our Bounty a Reproach, and upbraid the Poverty we relieved; so also, we must give with as much Secrecy as we can, *for our own sakes*, as well as theirs; lest we do, or seem to do, as the *Pharisees* did, sound a Trumpet before our Alms, and give to serve our own Glory, not the Necessities of our Neighbour; give to feed our own Vanity, and not the Hunger of those that want; for while Men labour thus to magnifie their Liberality in the Eyes of Men, they lessen it in the Eyes of God; not but that *sometimes* it must be done *publickly*, as when the Example may have great Influence upon others in drawing them in, to give more largely, to the greater Benefit and Advantage of the Poor, as is the Case of Subscriptions to charitable Uses, Money given at the Sacrament, Collections for Briefs, and the like. Beside, Public Charities are, generally speaking, of greater Use than Private, as extending farther, and may be done without Offence against our Saviour's Caution. For it is not the doing them *openly*,
but

but doing them with a vain-glorious *Purpose* to be seen of Men, that renders our Alms defective in God's esteem. And therefore, those who excuse themselves from public Almsgiving, under a Pretence that they should not do it openly, are guilty either of a great Prevarication, or mighty Weakness, either perverting or mistaking the true Design of this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, which brings me to the

(2.) Second Point; With what *Designs*, or for what *Ends*, we must bestow our Alms; and these are in short to honour God, to do Good unto our Neighbour, and to lay up Treasure for our selves in Heaven.

The first Thing to be propounded to our selves in this Duty, is, the *Glory* and *Honour of God*, who takes that as given to himself, which we give to the Poor with Regard to him, and in Obedience to his Laws. This is evident, by the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Discourse in the Twenty Fifth Chapter of St. *Matthew's* Gospel. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me, &c. Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these*

PROV. 3.
9.

these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. He looks upon himself, as honoured with our Substance, and with the First-fruits of our encrease; when tho' we cannot now, as the Jews did of old, express that Honour, in sacrificing the best of our Herds, and Flocks before his Altar, as Free-will Offerings, in acknowledgment of his Goodness to us, we freely and generously relieve the Poor out of our Estates, and make the same Acknowledgments to him, by honouring them as his Receivers. For even, while those very Rites were both accepted and required, this Duty of honouring God by Almsgiving was so much more acceptable, that it was preferred before them. Mercy was always esteem'd by God, as better than Sacrifice. He needs not any Thing from his Creatures, the World is his, and the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills, and therefore what he requires from us in Honour of him, is to communicate of the Plenty he has given us to those that want. To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased.

HEB. 13.
16.

The next Design or End we ought to have in Almsgiving, is, to do good to the Receiver, a Thing most necessary in this Duty to render it pleasing either to God

or

or Men, for even *Men* are not pleased with what we give, unless it apparently proceed from Kindness to them: Be the Gift it self never so beneficial to them, they cannot think themselves obliged to the Giver, if therein he aim'd at his own Credit and Reputation, or other private Interests, and gave not out of any prevailing Tenderness for *them*. And in *God's Esteem*, who eyes and values the Hearts of Men in all their Actions, and never accepts of any Thing as good, which flows not from a good Disposition; *Mercy* and *Compassion* are altogether necessary in all our Almsgiving. St. Paul, when he says, *Tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*; implies, that it is possible for a Man to give all his Goods away to charitable Uses, and yet to have nothing in him of the *Principle*, or *Grace* of *Charity*: For as he may perform the outward Act of *Humility* out of *Pride* and *Ambition*, to gain the applause of Men: so doubtless, he may the outward Acts of *Beneficence* to the Poor, out of a Principle of *Ostentation*, and *Vain-glory*, to get the Credit, without either the Desire or Care of doing Good, tho' it may also have this Effect, and be a real Advantage to those to whom he

gives. Now such a Charity, as well as such an Humility, springing only from Pride and Ostentation, is meerly Mechanical and Material; but has nothing of the Substance of true Vertue in it. Self-Love, and not Compassion to others, is at the Bottom of it; and therefore, whatsoever Good it does, that Good is accidental, and for want of an honest Principle, the Reward is lost. So says our Saviour, *Ye have your Reward*; that is, ye have the Praise of Men indeed (which is all ye aim at) but it is in vain for you to hope for any Reward hereafter.

But yet, notwithstanding all the Kindness and Compassion that is required, to purify our Intention in the Charities we bestow, thus far it is lawful to mind ourselves, and to consider our own Advantage, as well as others, in this Duty. *We may justly hope to be rewarded by God for it*, and very lawfully do the Duty with an Eye, or Respect to this Reward.

1 Tim. 6. God hath promised to reward it, *He that*
 17, 18, 19. *seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*
Charge them who are rich in this World,
 says St. Paul, *That they be ready to give,*
and glad to distribute, laying up in store for
themselves a good Foundation against the
Time to come, that they may attain Eternal
Life. And certainly it is very lawful to
 act

act in hope of God's Promises, and use the Rewards therein promised, as a Motive to discharge the Duty, else were these Promises not only useless, but even a Snare and Temptation to us.

From these Points well considered, we may have sufficient Knowledge of what our Saviour would have us to avoid, or do, design, or not design, in the Performance of this first great Duty of Almsgiving.



CHAP.



CHAP. IX.

Of PRAYER.

MATT. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,
12, 13, 14, 15.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the Hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men. Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.

Give us this Day our daily Bread.

And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors.

And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.

For, if ye forgive Men their Trespases, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.

THE second Religious Duty adopted here by Christ into his Institution, and for the better Performance of which he gives us some Directions, is that of Prayer, and what he says of it is in effect as follows.

“As Ostentation ought by no means
“to be your Design in your *Almsgiving*,
“so neither in your *Prayers*. When
“therefore ye pretend to offer up to God
“your

“ your private Devotions, do it in such
 “ a manner, that they may indeed be
 “ private. Let no vile Affection of be-
 “ ing observ’d and talk’d of for your Pie-
 “ ty, lead you to chuse such Places for
 “ Prayer, where ye may be seen or heard.
 “ For thus the Hypocrites do, who love
 “ to pray in the Streets, or any where
 “ else, as much in view as possible, that
 “ their Religion may acquire them Cre-
 “ dit and Repute amongst Men: and
 “ this, as it is their chief Design, is like
 “ to be all the Reward of such Devotion.
 “ Do ye on the contrary, when ye ad-
 “ dress your selves to God in private
 “ Prayer, retire into your Chambers, or
 “ your Closets, shut to your Door, and
 “ contrive to be as secret as ye can, and
 “ use not Artifices of any kind, which
 “ may by an affected Chance discover to
 “ your Family or others what ye are a-
 “ bout. This will best answer both the
 “ Nature and the Ends of private Prayer;
 “ and God, who observes you in the
 “ most secret Retirements, and hears the
 “ softest Whispers of a genuine and sin-
 “ cere Devotion, will reward you for it
 “ openly hereafter. Be careful also, when
 “ ye pray, to avoid a Multiplicity of use-
 “ less Words, and vain Enlargements,
 “ and impertinent Flourishes. Let your
 “ Re-

“ Requests be few, ; your Expressions
“ grave, and short, and comprehensive.
“ Be not too minute and particular, ei-
“ ther in what ye ask, or in your Argu-
“ ments for obtaining it. The Heathens
“ indeed are full of vain Repetitions in
“ this matter, verbose and trifling ; be-
“ cause they consider not that God is e-
“ very where, and at all times present ;
“ they address themselves to him as if he
“ were a finite Being like themselves,
“ and wanted an exact Information of
“ their Case ; or were apt to be fullen,
“ and needed abundance of Arguments
“ to move him ; or might be prevail’d
“ with, as Men sometimes are, by pom-
“ pous Rhetoric, or by long and artful
“ Orations. But this is a great Mistake :
“ your Heavenly Father knows both be-
“ fore, and better than you your selves,
“ what things ye have need of ; and is
“ sufficiently enclined by his own Dispo-
“ sition to hear, when ye offer up your
“ Requests with a sincere and decent
“ Modesty. After this manner there-
“ fore pray ye, *Our Father*, &c.

In explaining of this Paragraph, I might
and should have said something of the
Obligation to Prayer, as a Duty required
of Christians, altho’ it be not here direct-
ly commanded, but only supposed and
taken

taken for granted in those Words, *when thou prayest*. But because there is another whole Paragraph on this Subject, wherein Perseverance and Importunity in Prayer being required, our Obligation to Prayer it self, as a Duty, is more direct and visible; I shall confine my Thoughts here,

I. To the Consideration of the several *Sorts* or *Kinds* of Prayer.

II. To enquire into the Meaning of the two Cautions given, (1.) Against Ostentation; and, (2.) Against vain Repetitions in Prayer.

III. To make some short Observations upon that most excellent Form of Prayer which our Lord has here drawn up for us; concluding with a Paraphrase of the Prayer it self.

I. First then let us consider the several *Kinds* of Prayer. For as to the *Nature* of it, or *what Prayer is* in general, it is so well understood, that it needs no Description. The meer natural Light of Reason has taught the *Theory* of Prayer to all Men in all Ages, and the Impulse of meer natural Religion has forced even the lowdest and profanest of Mankind into the Practice of it, when they have been

been surprized by a sudden Danger. We will proceed therefore to enquire into the several Sorts of Prayer, and they are these:

(1.) *Mental*, wherein the Desire and Affections only, without Words, dart up themselves devoutly to God, either by way of Petition or Praise. This is indeed wholly imperceptible, or ought to be made so, to Men; but highly pleasing to God, and may be practised whatever Company we are in; or whatever Business we are about. An Example of this we have in our Blessed Master, who tho' we read indeed of no Prayer put up by him for the raising of *Lazarus*, we must conclude did silently by himself pray for it; for when they had removed the Grave-stone, he lift up his Eyes, and said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.* John 11. 41.

(2.) *Ejaculatory*, which is a like short and sudden Sally of the Affections, but expressed in Words, as that of our Saviour in his Thanksgiving just recited, *Father, I thank thee*: And at another time, the like; *In that Hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit,* Luke 10. *and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.* And these Ejaculations also, if used only upon proper Occa-

Occasions, and without Affectation, and from a real inward Principle of Piety, are not only accepted of God as Prayers or Praises, but tend to make Impressions of Seriousness upon the Company before whom we utter them. (3.) There are *public Prayers*, when at appointed Times we meet with the Neighbourhood at the House of God, the Church, to offer up in concert, by the Mouth of the Minister, and along with him, our Petitions and Thanksgivings, not only on our own account, but for the Community, of which we are Members, Civil and Ecclesiastical, and for the whole Christian Church in general. This also is a Duty, and of no small Consequence, as might be proved at large, if I had time; but I shall here only take notice of that one Text, wherein the Apostle cautions us, that we should *not forsake the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some profane and careless Christians was then and still is, to the Scandal of their Profession.* (4.) There are *Family Prayers*, when we call those together who are under our peculiar Care, to put up their joint Requests for such Blessings, spiritual and temporal, as are requisite for them as a Family, and to praise God for the Protection and Mercies we have received from

Heb. 10.
25.

from him in that Capacity. And this too has been the constant Practice of Good Men in all Ages; and the Reason of the thing sufficiently speaks both for the Piety and the Necessity of it. (5.) But lastly, there are *private Prayers*, wherein, retiring into some secret Place, apart from all Company, and in the Eye of none but God, we seriously and devoutly address our selves to him for such Mercies as concern our own personal State, not forgetting also our particular Friends, and others whom we are bound to pray for. I have reserved this to the last Place, because it is that very kind of Prayer, which our Lord especially mentions, and directs, in these Verses of his Sermon now before us. And indeed there is too much Occasion it should be pressed upon the Consciences of Men as a Duty: for 'tis justly to be fear'd, that there are many who go to the public Worship of God, and yet neglect the secret Devotions they ought to perform at home. I doubt there are too many Christians, who have still so much of the Pharisee in them, that willingly shew themselves in such Duties wherein their Religion may be seen of Men, and wherein they may serve their Credit and Reputation; but dispense with themselves in Duties which are required to be so private,

vate, as only to be observed by God, and which can have no other Principle than Conscience and true Piety. Here therefore we have an exprefs Command for *Closet Prayer*: *When thou prayest, enter into thy Closet; and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.* By *Closet* is meant any private Place, where we may be secure of being neither seen, overheard, nor interrupted in our Devotions. And to some such Convenience should every Christian retire, at least twice a day, Morning and Evening, for that Exercise; which has not only been the constant Practice of Good Men, but has the Example of Christ himself to recommend it, as we may gather from the following Passage. St. Mark tells us of him, that in the Morning rising up a great while before Day, he went out into a solitary Place, and there prayed. And St. Matthew, that when he had sent away the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain apart to pray; and when the Evening was come, he was there alone. The Reason of such a Practice also pleads for it as a Duty. For what can be more reasonable than to begin the Day with a pious and devout Adoration of that Infinite Being, upon which we continually depend for all the Necessaries and Comforts

Mark i.
31.

Mat. 14.
23.

CR
of
of
Gra
tion
Bul
like
goi
ledg
to p
and
all
his
that
selve
Con
the
of o
perf
as v
conf
Circ
to b
to,
priv
Con
part
publ
for
Sin,
cies
be f

of Life, to praise him for his Protection of us the past Night, and to implore his Grace to conduct us through the Temptations, and his Blessing to prosper us in the Business of the Day before us? And in like manner to conclude it, when we are going to Rest, with thankful Acknowledgments of his Mercy, beseeching him to pardon the Sins we have been guilty of, and humbly recommending our selves, and all that belong to us, to be kept safe by his Providence the ensuing Night? And that this should be done in secret by our selves, as well as at Church with the Congregation, is highly proper, because the public Service being to suit the Case of others, as well as our own, must be performed only in general Terms; whereas we have every one of us, when we consider our own spiritual or temporal Circumstances, some things particularly to beg of God, that may be suitable thereto, and on which we may enlarge in private Prayer, as there is Occasion. Our Confessions of Sin should also be more particular in secret, than the Terms in public Service will admit; our Petitions for Grace against this or that prevailing Sin, and our Thanksgivings for such Mercies as we especially have received, should be so too, and have more room to be so

in our Closets than in public. In a word, this part of Religion, I mean secret Prayer, is so natural, so rational, so necessary, that it will be hard to suppose any Christian, who neglects it, to have the Fear or Love of God in his Heart, or any due Belief or Sense of his Dependance upon him. Being assured therefore that secret Prayer is a Duty, which every one of us owes to God, let us now consider,

II. Those two Cautions our Saviour here interposes in the Performance of it: (1.) Against Ostentation. (2.) Against vain Repetitions.

(1.) Against *Ostentation*. The Hypocrites in our Saviour's Time were used to run into some Corner of the Temple, or of the Streets, or other Places of Concourse, and there with Hands and Eyes lifted up, perform what they called their private Prayers; to the intent, that being observed by the Multitude, their wondrous Piety might be talked of: And thus while they pretended to pay their Homage to God, they were in truth idolatrously worshipping themselves; or praying to the People for Reputation, rather than to him for Mercy; and settling a Fund for their own Praises, upon the foot of his. Now this being an odious Mockery

kery of God, our Saviour testifies his Abhorrence of it, and requires us to affect *Secrecy* in our Prayers, as much as they did *Openness* and *Observation*: that we should not only *not desire* to be seen of Men, when we perform them; but also *studiously contrive to avoid it*, by a strict and close Retirement. Nor is the Choice of a private *Place* for our private Devotions, all that is included: there are many little Arts of Vanity, which Hypocrites make use of to defeat the Intention of the Letter. They will contrive perhaps to be *overheard* at their Prayers, tho' they will not be *seen* at them; or by some lucky Hints in Conversation they will take care it shall be known how strict they are in secret Duties, and the like. But all these Arts, whatever they be, (for Hypocrisy has a thousand sly Devices) are equally condemned by the Reason and Spirit of this Caution; and 'tis the part of our Consciences to admonish us faithfully of them, that we do not deceive our selves. Not that it is a Sin, after all, to *use our Voices* in Closet Prayers, tho' 'tis possible by that means we may be overheard in it. But when this or the like is done *of purpose to be discovered*, when we pray alone in our Closets, *with a design* to be overheard; or leave a Door unfasten'd, in

N 3

hopes

hopes to be surprized and seen; or mention our Prayers in Company, *with an Intention* of Vanity and Ostentation: This is the Sin we are here cautioned against.

Now tho' what has been said was chiefly spoken at first of *personal* and *private Prayer*, as distinguish'd from the other Kinds; and tho' it is in the Nature of the thing most immediately applicable thereto; yet in those *other Kinds* of Prayer we are as much obliged to avoid whatsoever is really Ostentation, as in this. We must *go to the Church* to worship God in public (and the oftner we go the better;) consequently our Devotions must be seen there; and probably our devout and frequent Attendance *may be commended* too: But if we go to Church *for that very end*, to gain our selves a Reputation, and to draw the Praises of Men upon us; if, when we are there, we *contrive* to be taken notice of by *affected* Gestures of Devotion, a louder Voice than others, or the like; 'tis Ostentation and Hypocrisy. Tho' *Family Prayers* are to be used, and whatever happens, we are not to be ashamed of them; yet Conscience towards God, and the promoting Religion in our Families, ought to be their only Principle. If therefore we *proclaim* and *boast* of them, if we chuse such a public Room

in

in our Houses to perform them in, as that we may be *easily overheard* by the Neighbourhood, or pray *very loud on purpose* that we may be so; 'tis still Hypocrisy and Ostentation. *Ejaculatory* Prayers are good upon proper Occasions, and at proper Times; but if we are venting them at every turn, and do really *affect* them in Company, to be thought devout; that wretched Mixture of Vanity makes them criminal to us. And so our *Mental* Prayers, which as they are formed only in the Heart, should be sent up from thence in a serious, but in a silent unobserved Devotion; if by any outward Postures and Actions we *contrive to discover* them to those about us, we lose the Religion in the Ostentation of them. In short, of whatever Kind our Prayers are, if we design any thing else but God and true Religion, we profane the Sacrifices of the Lord, to whom alone is due the whole Intention of such Acts of Worship; and whatever we may get of the Praise of Men in this World, we have nothing to expect, but the Portion of Hypocrites hereafter.

(2.) The second Caution which our Saviour here gives us, is against *vain Repetitions*. He neither says, nor can his Meaning be, that we should use no Repetitions

titions at all; for we have many Instances to the contrary in *David's* Psalms; and we have the Example of our Saviour too, who in his Agony in the Garden *prayed thrice, saying the same Words*. But we are forbid such Repetitions as are *vain* and *needless*, such as the *Heathens* used, who thought their Gods would the rather hearken to them for their much speaking; such a *minute descending to Particulars* in our Prayers, as if that infinite Being we pray to, did not know our Case, till we our selves inform him fully of it; such a *Multiplicity* of Words to express *one* and *the same* Request, as if he were liable to mistake us, and could not apprehend what we desire, without laborious Explications; such *Flourishes of Rhetorick*, and such a *Profusion of Arguments* to enforce it, as if he were to be deceived or flattered into Compliance, or did not consider the Reasonableness of what we ask, or were not inclined to do us good without much Persuasion. Thus indeed it is sometimes necessary to apply our selves to *Men*, who tho' they should be able to help us, may not know our Wants, or may not readily apprehend us; or tho' they do, may perhaps be unwilling, and need to be persuaded: But God has none of these Imperfections and Weaknesses; he under-
stands

stands our Necessities better than we do our selves; he knows both how and when to help us, and from the infinite Compassion of his Nature, is more ready of himself to help, than we are to desire he should. For this Reason *Solomon* discreetly advises us against much talking in our Prayers. *God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth,* Ecclef. 5. *therefore let thy Words be few.* And our^{2.} Saviour cautions us in this Paragraph against *vain Repetitions*. Whatever is not requisite to *heighten* our Devotions, or whatever is used meerly to lengthen them, and whatever may imply, or seem to suppose any of the beforementioned Weaknesses and Imperfections in God, are the Repetitions here condemn'd. In opposition to which our Lord has prescribed us a Form or Pattern of Prayer, extreamly short, and yet expressive and significant of every thing in general Terms, which we can or ought to desire. Some perhaps will say, If God knows our Wants, and will supply them, of what Use is Prayer? Why should we pray at all? To which we may answer, that as Thanks and Praise are not required of us, as bringing any Profit to God; his Glory and Honour are the same, however neglectful we may be of our Duty; so neither is Prayer required as necessary for the conveying any

any Knowledge of our Wants to God, or perswading him to relieve them; but as an Exercise of our Faith, and an Acknowledgment of our constant Dependance upon him. As he who does not give Thanks for the Benefits he receives, is not worthy of them; so likewise he who does not desire and ask a Blessing, does not deserve to have it bestow'd upon him. This therefore being the Ground and Reason of Prayer, not the laying open our Wants before God by way of Information, or the prevailing with him by florid Arguments to help us; but the reducing to Practice an humble and believing Sense of his Power, his Goodness, and his other Attributes, and of our own Dependance upon him; it will appear in the Nature of the thing, that Prayer it self is still necessary, because 'tis decent, reasonable, and commanded; and yet that Abundance of Words in Prayer is needless, as by the Caution here 'tis also sinful; I will now proceed,

III. In the third place, to make some short and general Observations from this Divine Platform and Example of Prayer, which our Lord has left us; and they shall be these that follow.

(I.) That

(1.) That a Form of Prayer is lawful, not only in our public Services, but in our private Devotions too. Our Saviour is speaking here of secret or closet Prayer, and he bids us pray *thus*, thus, *Our Father*, &c. that is, either *in these Words* (for the Prayer it self is expressly delivered as a Form, *Luke 11. 2.*) or *after this manner*, which will imply not only that we should put up those or the like Petitions, but that we should, or may at least, pray also in a *prepared Form of Words*, as this which he gives us for a Pattern is.

(2.) That *Brevity* is most proper and most acceptable in our Devotions; not but that upon particular Occasions, spiritual or temporal, we may enlarge, as the Fervency of our Minds, or the Necessity of the Benefits we pray for, may excite us: for long Prayers are not sinful merely as they are long, but as they are *lengthened out of a vain Notion* of being more *acceptable to God* thereby, or as they are *spun out by impertinent, needless, and affected Repetitions*.

(3.) That the Method of the Lord's Prayer is not strictly and to the utmost Niceness binding, yet *in general* it is: that is, we should begin with a decent and devout Preface, and end with a like solemn Conclusion, and order the Matter as well as the Manner of Petitions, in some
general

general Proportion, to the Directory here given us, as particularly,

(4.) That our Desire of *Spiritual* Blessings should take up more room in our Hearts and Devotions than of temporal. There is here but one short Petition for the Necessaries of this present Life, *Give us this Day our daily Bread*: but there are two which regard our spiritual State, *viz.* for the Forgiveness of our past Sins, and the preserving from Sin for the future.

(5.) That *what tends immediately to the Glory of God* in the World, should be the chief Subject of our Prayers, and most regarded in them. Here are but six Petitions in all; and the three first (which have the Precedence, as of more Concern than the other) do especially relate to the Glory and Honour of God, as, *Hallowed be thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

(6.) That we should pray for *others*, as well as for *our selves*; for it runs in the Plural Number, *Our Father; Give us this Day our daily Bread; Forgive us our Trespases; Lead us not into Temptation; Deliver us from Evil.*

(7.) That *Praises*, and particular Adoration and Acknowledgment of God's *Power*, and other Glorious Attributes, should be join'd with all our Prayers. So
here,

here, Our Father *which art in Heaven.*
For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and
the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

(8.) We must observe, that tho' the *Intercession* and *Merits of Christ* are not here pleaded or mentioned (because Christ had not then suffered upon the Cross, nor ascended into Heaven to enter upon his Mediatorial Intercession for us, when he prescribed this Form of Prayer;) yet we learn abundantly from other Places in the New Testament, that we must *put up all our Prayers through him, and in his Name*, not hoping to be accepted on any other Terms; and indeed he himself instructs us elsewhere of the Necessity of this, when he tells us, *Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* John 16. 23. & 15. 16.
Having drawn these general Observations, and that in as small a Compass as was possible, it now remains only that I conclude with a short Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer; and the rather *short*, because it would not be proper to make a long one, since the Prayer it self was designed as a Pattern of Brevity and Conciseness in our Devotions; and yet every Word being so very copious and expressive, it must be such a Paraphrase, as may give us at least a general Notion of the Extent and Meaning of each Sentence in it.

“ Most

“ Most Glorious God, the Creator and
 “ Sovereign of all things, the Father of
 “ our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and in him, by
 “ Adoption and Grace, the Father of all
 “ true Christians, infinite in Compa-
 “ sion towards them, and infinitely pow-
 “ erful, as well as ready to grant, what-
 “ ever is fit for them to ask: May thy
 “ Name be every where adored with the
 “ profoundest Reverence; thy Power,
 “ thy Wisdom, thy Justice, thy Mercy,
 “ and all thy other glorious Attributes,
 “ which thou displayest not only in Hea-
 “ ven, but from thence over all the World,
 “ be acknowledged with humble Awe
 “ and Admiration, Fear and Love, by
 “ all Mankind. Let thy Holy Spirit rule
 “ in our Hearts, subdue our Corruptions,
 “ and engage our Affections to a most
 “ willing Obedience to thy Laws: Let
 “ all Nations be enlightened with a true
 “ Knowledge of Thee, and of *Jesus Christ*
 “ whom thou hast sent: Let the Heathen
 “ become his Inheritance, and the utter-
 “ most Parts of the Earth his Possession;
 “ and in thy due time compleat the Num-
 “ ber of the Elect, and bring us all to thy
 “ everlasting Kingdom of Glory. Shour
 “ down upon us such Influences of thy
 “ holy Spirit, as may enable us to submit
 “ cheerfully to thy Will in every thing,
 “ and

“ and obey thy Commands faithfully,
“ with the same Readiness, Sincerity,
“ and Delight, as the Angels do in Hea-
“ ven. Vouchsafe to bestow upon us
“ this Day, whatever thy Divine Wis-
“ dom (which best knows what is fit for
“ us) shall see necessary to the Support
“ of our Bodies, to the Advantage of our
“ Affairs, to the Comfort of our Minds,
“ and above all to the spiritual Benefit of
“ our Souls. Pardon all our Sins, and
“ for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, lay not
“ upon us the Punishment for them
“ which we deserve: Forgive us, Gra-
“ cious Lord, as we in obedience to thy
“ Command, are heartily ready to for-
“ give all such as have injured or offend-
“ ed us. Remove far from us whatever
“ may prove an Occasion of Sin, or a
“ Temptation to it; or at least, supply
“ us by thy Holy Spirit with Strength
“ and Resolution effectually to overcome
“ all Temptations. Deliver us from Sin,
“ that worst of Evils which can befall us;
“ and from the Devil, the Author of it:
“ that his malicious Subtlety may not be
“ suffered to draw us into Wickedness,
“ nor his malicious Power be allowed to
“ hurt us here, or to triumph in our
“ Damnation and Misery hereafter. All
“ this we beg, most Gracious Lord, as
“ acknow-

“ acknowledging that thine is the King-
 “ dom ; thou only hast Right to the Ado-
 “ ration and Service of all thy Crea-
 “ tures ; thine is the Power, thou over-
 “ rulest all things both in Heaven and
 “ Earth, and canst do abundantly above
 “ whatever we can ask or think ; and
 “ thine is the Glory, the Praise of all
 “ Good things we have enjoy’d already,
 “ or do now enjoy ; the Glory of thy
 “ Grace in our Redemption, and in the
 “ Conduct of thy faithful Servants hi-
 “ therto by thy Word and Spirit, is ex-
 “ ceeding great ; the Glory of thy Provi-
 “ dence is magnified in all Events from
 “ the Beginning of Time, and may the
 “ Glory of both be given thee in the
 “ most thankful Praises and Hallelujahs
 “ to all Eternity. Amen.



CHAP. X.

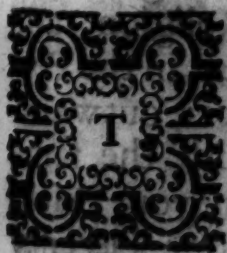
Of Fasting.

MATT. VI. 16, 17, 18.

Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the
Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance: For
they disfigure their Faces, that they may
appear unto Men to fast. Verily I say
unto you, they have their Reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine
Head, and wash thy Face:

That thou appear not unto Men to fast,
but unto thy Father which is in secret;
And thy Father which seeth in secret,
shall reward thee openly.



THE Last of the Three great
religious Duties, in the
Performance of which our
Lord cautions us against
Ostentation, or a desire of
Applause, is that of Fast-

ing, and the Caution is delivered in Words to this Effect.

“ Likewise, when by religious Fasts
 “ and Mortifications, ye pretend to im-
 “ prove Devotion, or discipline your
 “ selves to Vertue, beware that these
 “ excellent Purposes be not corrupted by
 “ a mixture of Vain-glory, which will
 “ turn the whole into a Scene of gross
 “ Hypocrisy. Shew not your selves a-
 “ broad, at such a Time, with any af-
 “ fected Gloominess or Dejection in your
 “ Looks, or any formal Singularities in
 “ your Air, or Gate, or Dress, to draw
 “ the Neighbourhood into an Opinion of
 “ your extraordinary Sanctity, and se-
 “ vere and mortified Lives. For if ye
 “ thus affect the Praise of Men, those
 “ empty Praises are all the Reward ye are
 “ like to meet with. God sees through
 “ and despises, and abhors these little
 “ Arts of Ostentation, however Men may
 “ be deceived by them, and will condemn
 “ you at the last as Hypocrites. Let your
 “ Fasting therefore be, as it ought to be,
 “ a pure and simple act of Religion; and
 “ as such, make it as private in the Per-
 “ formance as ye can; appear outward-
 “ ly as at other Times, with the same
 “ Easiness and Freedom in your Mien
 “ and Countenance, the same Decency
 “ and

“and Neatness in your Dress; that
 “Men may not be able to distinguish
 “when ye fast, and when ye do not.
 “Tis enough, that God observes you:
 “Humble your selves in secret before
 “him only, and he will publicly re-
 “ward you for it, before Men and
 “Angels, at the great Day of Recom-
 “pence.

Now voluntary Fasting, tho’ not di-
 rectly commanded in this Place, yet from
 what our Saviour here says about it,
 may be supposed to be a Christian Du-
 ty. I shall therefore consider,

I. The Duty of Fasting in general, as
 a Duty required under the Christi-
 an Dispensation.

II. The Ends and Usefulness of Fast-
 ing.

III. The proper Measures of this Du-
 ty.

I. Let us consider the Duty of Fast-
 ing, as a Christian Duty. It may be
 said, that however our Lord was plea-
 sed to excuse his Disciples from Fasting,
 whilst he was with them upon Earth,
 yet he assures those of *John the Baptist*, Mat. 9.
 and that in the hearing of his own Dis-14, 15.
 ciples, that there should come a Time

when they should fast, and that not only for want of necessary Supplies to satisfy their Hunger and Thirst, which was their Case very often; and which some Interpreters would have to be the Meaning of our Saviour's Answer there, but by voluntary and religious Fasting, which certainly is the more proper Sense of the Words: For doubtless the Question was proposed concerning such Fasting, as the Disciples of *John* and the *Pharisees* observed, either voluntarily of themselves, or by Direction and Institution of their several Sects; but they knew very well, that the Disciples of Christ did not observe Fasts, so that if he thought fit to answer their Question appositely, when he said, that they should fast, he must mean *religious Fasting*, and so no doubt his Disciples understood him: For after his Ascension into Heaven, when the Apostles to whom he had committed the Care and Government of the Church, began to enter upon that Holy Ministry, they thought themselves obliged to observe this Duty of Fasting, as soon as there was a proper Occasion for it. It does not appear to be required of them by any express Command, nor was there any need for it, the *Jews* being well accustomed to Fasting upon all proper Occasions.

casions. Thus *David* fasted, when he besought the Lord for the Child that was born to him, by the Wife of *Uriah*. And St. *Luke* relates of *Annah* a devout Woman, that notwithstanding her very great Age, she departed not from the Temple, but served God with Fastings and Prayers Night and Day: And many other Instances might be given, by which it would appear, that the *Jews* were easily disposed to this Duty; it being a common Notion amongst them, that in the Time of Affliction and Suffering, or for the obtaining of some great Blessing, they ought to humble themselves, and to pray, which was very properly accompany'd with Fasting. Nor was it the Notion of the *Jews* only, but of all the *Eastern* Nations. How readily did the King of *Nineveh*, appoint a Fast upon the threatning of *Jonah*, altho' a stranger Prophet, and a Messenger from a God whom they did not worship; and how solemn, how strict, how universal was that Fast? If it be objected, that this was probably done by the Prophet's Direction, and in Obedience to him only, for that Fasting being an hardship upon Human Nature, seems not to have been the Dictate of meer natural Religion; Let us enquire into the Pra-

Etice of other Nations, such as *India* and *China*, in the remotest Parts of the *East*, who could have no Communication with the *Jews*, nor have any Thing of Divine Revelation to guide them; and we shall find, that their Philosophers and Sects of devout Persons, not only taught them many useful Maxims of Government, and Rules of Life: But exercised, and do still practise such Instances of Mortification, and particularly Fasting, as might appear incredible, if they were not attested by Eye-witnesses of good Authority; and by this it is evident, that however these Austerities seem a Violence upon Nature, yet they have been practised, as the Dictates of natural Religion, and not by Imitation only of the *Jewish* Discipline. Religious Fasting being therefore a Practice of all Nations, and in all Ages, as well before, as in our Saviour's Time; no wonder, that he should adopt it into his Religion, as a Duty to be observed by all his Followers. And accordingly St. Paul says of himself, in his Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, that he was in

2 Cor. 11.
27.

Fasting often. By which, having just before mentioned Hunger and Thirst, that other sort of Fasting upon necessity and want; 'tis plain, he means such voluntary Fasting, as he thought fit, to

en-

enjoin himself the better to dispose him to pray for that Grace and Assistance, which was requisite to enable him to perform his Duty, and to bear his Sufferings. And as he performed this Duty himself, so doubtless he required the Practice of it in all the Churches he planted, as the other Apostles did in theirs; for frequent Fasting was an early Practice in the Christian Churches, as the first Ecclesiastical Writers inform us. And tho' it did by Degrees degenerate into Superstition, and new and strange Austerities were added, and many impertinent and burdensome Niceties in the Observation; and then Men began to be proud of their Humiliations, to place all Holiness, if not all Religion in the Performance of such mechanical Injunctions, and to fancy that they *merited* at the Hands of God thereby: Yet this Superstition, these vain Additions and false Notions being purged away from it at the Reformation, our Church discreetly and piously continued the use of Fasting, in such manner as our Saviour and the Apostles left it, and it is still as necessary a Duty, and as expedient to the proper Ends of it as ever.

II. Our Second Enquiry therefore is to be for what *Ends* and *Uses* in Religion Fasting was appointed, and how it may be serviceable to the encrease of Piety and Vertue: For what has been so generally practised by good Men, must be supposed to have a Tendency to some good Purpose; and having always had a place amongst religious Duties, it may be taken for granted, that when duly performed, it ministers to some religious Ends. Now these are Three, (1.) To raise and quicken our Devotions; (2.) To humble and punish our selves for Sin; and, (3.) To bring our sensual Appetites and Lusts, under a due Subjection for the future,

(1.) *To raise and quicken our Devotions.* When the Stomach is loaded, the Fumes and Vapours arising thence, are apt to cloud the Head, to dissipate the Powers of the Mind, and clog the Affections; especially, with regard to such spiritual Exercises, as Prayer and Meditation, wherein the Mind should wholly draw it self off from this World, and exert it self with the utmost Fervency and Vigour towards Heaven. Now Fasting, as it takes away those Impediments, gives greater Freedom to Contemplati-

on,

on, more Vivacity to our Apprehension of Things Spiritual, more Scope to a devout and pious Soul to exert it self, by how much the less the sensual Appetites are indulged. And therefore, tho' Prayer is a Duty every Day, and so *cannot* always be attended with Fasting; and tho' it is more especially and abundantly to be exercised on the Lord's Day, which being a Day of spiritual Rejoicing to Christians, they *ought not* then to fast; yet the Prudence of good Men has ever taught them, when they have had *extraordinary* Occasions for Prayer, and have set a-part any of their common Days for that Exercise, *to join Fasting* with it, that they might with greater Application and Intenseness pour out their Souls before God, and keep their Hearts more closely to a religious Frame, and keep their Heads as clear as possible, for the important Business they are engaged in. This then is the first End of Fasting.

(2.) The Second is, *to humble and afflict our selves for Sin.* When our Consciences, awakened by the Grace, or startled by some angry Providence of God, into a deep Sense of Guilt (either the Guilt of *all our Sins* in general, or of any *particular very grievous Sin*, that lies heavy upon us) are led to a godly Sorrow and Repen-

Repentance, and we are earnestly desirous of making our Peace with God through Christ, by an humble Confession, condemning our selves for what we have done amiss, and casting our selves upon his infinite Mercy for a Pardon. I say, when the Case is thus with us, what can be a more proper Way to express our inward Trouble of our Minds, or at least more natural to go along with it, than such a neglect of our Bodies, as Fasting, which is the common Effect of extraordinary Grief, even upon any secular Occasion? What can be more decent, than thus to shew an Holy Indignation at our selves for having offended God, or thus to revenge upon our selves, the former sinful Indulgence of our Lusts and Appetites? How fit is it, that that Body by which we have been so oft led into Sin, should have its share in the Sorrow, and should smart under the Discipline of Repentance? How reasonable and prudent for us to *Judge our selves, that we should not be judged*, to embrace a voluntary Punishment, by the Severities of Mortification; that we may be comforted hereafter, when those whose Sins sat easy upon them in this World shall be tormented? I would not be mistaken here, as if I thought that *Fasting*,
 or

or any other Mortifications for Sin, would *atone* for it in the sight of God, and *merit* Pardon for it at his Hands, for certainly nothing but the Blood of Christ can do that; but I speak of them only, as proper Testimonies of the Truth and Depth of our Repentance, of our hatred of Sin, and abhorrence of our selves for it; all which together may recommend us by way of *Fitness* and *Preparation*, not by way of Merit, to such an Interest in the Mercies of God through Christ, as will at last save us. And to such an use has Fasting always been applied by good Men, in their private Humiliations for Sin; and by the Authority of religious Governments, when they have appointed public and solemn Fasts, to deplore the Sins of the Nation, to avert the Wrath and Judgments of God, and to qualify themselves for any special Blessing they have to beg of him. But,

(3.) There is yet a farther use of Fasting: For it may look not only *backward*, as expressive of a deep Remorse for Sins already past; but *forward* also, to bring our *sensual Appetites and Lusts* under a due Subjection for the future. When Adam was in his State of Innocence, the sensual Part of Man was under the Government of his Reason, and that was guided

ded by Religion: But the Corruption of our Nature by his Fall, so overthrew the Order of Things, that the *Faculties of the Soul*, having rebelled against Religion, were justly left themselves to be enslaved by the inferior Appetites of the Body; and now, as this or the other Humour prevails in the Blood and Animal Spirits, our Inclinations violently lead us, and our Reason is not able to controul them, and the small still Voice of Religion is not to be heard in such a Tumult. Hence Lust and Intemperance are continually prompting Men, and too often prevail with them; and the Love of Ease and Pleasure (even in those who are otherwise good Men) make them *somewhat Listless to Religion*, and very much unqualify them to *suffer Hardships* for a good Conscience, if they should be called to it. Now Fasting goes a great way to rectify all these Disorders. By keeping the Blood cool, and the Spirits at a moderate pitch, it reduces the Body to a governable Temper, and gives the Powers of Reason opportunity to exert themselves, and when-ever Reason can be heard, Religion will. By retrenching Luxury and Excess in Eating, and Drinking, it starves irregular Lust, which is cherished by nothing more than

hab

those

those Indulgences. By frequently using Men to cross their sensual Desires and Appetites, and to put themselves under voluntary Hardships, it wears off that Tenderneſs and Delicacy that ſo ill becomes the manly Conſtitution of a Chriſtian, enures them to bear much greater Difficulties, that may happen to be laid upon them, weans them from the Affectation of Eaſe and Pleaſure; renders that eminent Duty of Self-denial familiar to them, and ſo mortifies them to the World and its Enjoyments, that their Minds are more ſpiritualized, their Reliſh of Religion, and a Life to come is heightened, and whatever Croſſes, and Afflictions, and Perſecutions they meet with in their way to Heaven, they have little Power to move them. For theſe Reaſons St. Paul took care by Faſtings and Mortifications *to keep his Body under, and bring it under Subjection.* And ¹ Cor. 9. has adviſed us alſo of the Neceſſity of it. *For if ye live after the Fleſh, ye ſhall die;* Rom. 8. *but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.* And thus the Primitive Chriſtians prepared themſelves for Perſecution, by beginning it firſt upon themſelves, in a courſe of ſevere and frequent Mortifications. I have now done with the Ends of Faſting,

ing, and shall proceed to consider,

III. The proper Measures of this Duty: And here I must observe in general, that Fasting does not only imply the refusing our ordinary Sustainance, and Refreshments of Eating and Drinking, but includes also a declining of *secular Pleasures and Gratifications*, of every other sort for the Time, so as to render the Mortification uniform, and to humble the Vanity of our Minds, as well as curb the Appetites of the Body, and both these in Proportion to that kind of Fasting, which we perceive to be necessary for our Purpose: I add this last Clause, because Fasting is of two Kinds, the one severe, but short; the other moderate, but long continued.

The *First* is Fasting in the strictest Propriety of the Word; when for a whole Day, or much the greatest Part of it, we reject *all use* of Meats, and Drink, and Pleasures, retiring from the World, and confining our selves to religious Meditation, and to devout and fervent Prayer, with a due Attendance on the Worship of God in public, if we can have the Opportunity. In this strict manner should be kept those general and solemn Fasts, appointed by Authority for national Humiliation

miliation and Repentance; attending at Church both Parts of the Day, to lament before God our own and the Nations Sins, and to implore those public Blessings, which we are called to pray for at that Time; spending the rest of the Day in the like pious Offices at home, and eating nothing (if our Constitutions will bear it) till the Evening. This sort of Fasting also may in some Cases by a Parity of Reason be proper and requisite for private Persons, when their Consciences being burdened with Remorse for some particular and grievous Sin, or with a deep Sense of all their Sins in general, they desire to perform a special Act of Repentance and Self-revenge, and to make their Peace with God thereupon. Or, when they lie under any great Affliction, and would sollicite more earnestly the removal of it; or fear any great impending Evil, and would avert it, or are desirous of any Blessing from Heaven of very great Consequence to them, and would exert their utmost Fervour and Devotion in praying for it. But if (as in some Constitutions it may so happen) this strict and total Fasting may prove an hindrance to their Devotion, Prudence join'd with Piety must direct them what to do; for after all,

Fast-

Fasting is in this Case (I mean, when intended as an help to Prayer) no more than a ministerial or assisting Duty; and if it hinder, instead of helping, is no Duty at all.

The *Second* Sort of Fasting is a *Course of Abstinence* continued for several Days together, wherein we confine our Appetites not within the Bounds of Temperance only (for this is always a Duty,) but of *Self-denial* and *Mortification*, to a *very sparing Use* of Meats and Drink, as to the Quantity, and a choice of the *plainest, coarsest, and least agreeable* sorts of them, as to the Quality; with a general *disregard of Pleasure and Diversions* the whole Time, or at least a very tender and cautious Admittance of them, and an industrious Care to sit as loose to them as possible. It is not requisite here (as it is in Fasting properly so called) to spend all the Interests of our Time in acts of Religion and Devotion, tho' it may be fit to intersperse it with *more frequent* returns of Prayer than ordinary, according to our spiritual Occasions; but we ought always to accompany *this sort* of Fasting, as well as the other, with a particular Disposition to Penitence and Piety, a strict Watchfulness over our Appetites and Passions; and a constant Diligence

in observing our own Weakness, and a studiousness of all proper Ways and Means to get the Mastery over them. Now that such an *Abstinence* as this, so regulated and so attended, may not improperly bear the Name of *Fasting*, is plain; both, because in the Language of Holy Scripture, it is sometimes call'd so (for so must all those Places be understood, that speak of *Fasting several Days together*, except in the Case of *Moses, Elijah*, and *Christ*, who were supported by special Miracle:) And because it really answers some of the great *Ends* of Fasting *as much*, and some others of them *more effectually*, than all the strictness that can be on one single Day. It may serve to compose the Mind to Prayer, and to excite Devotion in those, who cannot bear a strict and total Fast, but would be hindered by it. It tends to Humiliation, Repentance, and Reformation of Life, as it tends to Mortification. And indeed, this last is the peculiar use of it. For Mortification is not to be the work of now and then a Day, but requires long Abstinence, and repeated Restraints to effect it, as it should be. The Church therefore has set a-part the Forty Days of *Lent*, as an annual returning Season for it; and were this Season duly so employ'd, it

would be found by Experience, to contribute very much, by the Grace and Blessing of God, to the reducing our sensual Lusts, and bringing our bodily Appetites under Government, to the drawing of our Affections from this World, the mortifying us to secular and vain Pleasures, and the making us more serious and devout in our Religion. Having thus considered the Measures of Fasting, as applicable and proper to the several Ends and Uses of it, I shall only add farther on this Head, that no certain Measures of it can be *universally* laid down, as obligatory *to all*: Every Person, who is so well disposed, as to practise it in any measure, must be left to regulate the particular Manner and Frequency of it, as Age and Strength, and Constitution, are able to bear. For tho' we are required to mortify the Deeds of the Body, our Religion does not put such hardships upon us, as may destroy the Body it self.

I have said nothing here, except in the Paraphrase at the beginning of that *Ostentation* in this Duty of Fasting, which our Saviour particularly cautions us against. And I think I need not; that Crime being altogether the same in its Nature, in this, as in the two former

CHAP. X. Of Fasting.

211

mer Articles of Alms and Prayer; and having spoken of it there, I should but repeat the same again, if I consider it afresh under this Head of Fasting. The Paraphrase therefore shall suffice for that; and I will proceed to the next Part of this excellent Sermon on the Mount.



P 2 CHAP.



CHAP. XI.

*Of not laying up Treasures upon Earth,
but of laying them up in Heaven,
and of Trust in God's Providence.*

MATT. VI. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,
25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

*Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon
Earth, where Moth and Rust doth cor-
rupt, and where Thieves break through
and steal.*

*But lay up for your selves Treasures in
Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust
doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not
break through and steal.*

*For where your Treasure is, there will your
Heart be also.*

*The Light of the Body is the Eye : if there-
fore thine Eye be single, thy whole Body
shall be full of Light.*

*But if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body
shall be full of Darknes. If therefore
the*

the Light that is in thee be Darknes,
how great is that Darknes?

No Man can serve two Masters: for either
he will hate the one, and love the other;
or else he will hold to the one, and despise
the other. Ye cannot serve God and
Mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought
for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what
ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body,
what ye shall put on: is not the Life more
than Meat, and the Body than Rai-
ment?

Behold the Fowls of the Air: for they sow
not, neither do they reap, nor gather
into Barns; yet your Heavenly Father
feedeth them. Are ye not much better
than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one
Cubit unto his Stature?

And why take ye thought for Raiment?

Consider the Lillies of the Field, how they
grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say unto you, that even Solo-
mon in all his Glory was not arrayed
like one of these.

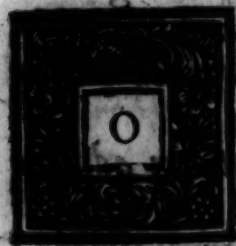
Wherefore if God so clothe the Grass of the
Field, which to day is, and to morrow is
cast into the Oven; shall he not much more
clothe you, O ye of little Faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the Morrow, for the Morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.



OUR Lord having sufficiently cautioned his Disciples against seeking this World's Praise in an ostentatious Performance of Religious Duties, warns them next against a Desire of the *Wealth* and *Riches* of this World. And here he enters upon a Doctrine wholly Evangelical, proper to no Religion, but to that which he taught, and agreeable only to that spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, which he was then erecting. But because it must appear a new and strange Precept to the *Jews*, who expected that the Kingdom of the Messiah would be founded in the Enjoyment

ment of Riches and temporal Prosperity, he proceeds to argue for the Observance of it, by shewing the Reasonableness of the Duty in several Particulars. Thus therefore in effect he speaks to us in the present Paragraph.

“ Make it not the Business of your
“ Lives to get and hoard up earthly Treas-
“ ures ; set not your Hearts upon them,
“ they are vain in their own Nature :
“ The richest Furniture wears away by
“ Use and Age, and even your Gold laid
“ by consumes in Rust, and all are but
“ uncertain Possessions, which ye may
“ easily be deprived of by a thousand Ac-
“ cidents. But instead thereof, provide
“ your selves an Inheritance in the World
“ to come, a Treasure which neither Vio-
“ lence nor Fraud can take from you, nor
“ Time nor Misfortunes can destroy. For
“ whatever you esteem as your Happiness,
“ on that will your Hearts and your Af-
“ fections be set. If your Judgments be
“ good, ye will rightly discern the Va-
“ lue of heavenly Treasures above earth-
“ ly, and direct your Aims and your De-
“ sires accordingly ; but if your Judg-
“ ments be corrupt and blinded, your
“ Choice will certainly be wrong, and
“ how fatal must such an Error
“ prove ! Nor will the Folly be less, to

“ think to *divide* your selves between
 “ this World and the other. For it is
 “ impossible to obey two Masters com-
 “ manding contrary Services; to be de-
 “ voted faithfully to God, and at the
 “ same time governed by the opposite In-
 “ terests and Maxims of this World. Be
 “ not therefore solicitous to *make a Fi-*
 “ *gure*, but content your selves with the
 “ Necessaries of Life according to your
 “ Condition, and even for these, for your
 “ ordinary Food and Raiment, be not
 “ anxiously thoughtful; but having em-
 “ ployed your Industry in the use of ho-
 “ nest and proper Means to obtain them,
 “ leave the Event to God, depending al-
 “ ways upon his Providence, which will
 “ not leave you destitute, and which you
 “ see takes care of every other Creature.
 “ The Birds of the Air are incapable of
 “ plowing and sowing, or of the Arts of
 “ Trade and Merchandize; all they can
 “ do is to go out and *seek* their Food,
 “ and God provides it for them: and if
 “ he thus feeds them, will he neglect or
 “ overlook the nobler Branches of his
 “ Family? If he will not suffer even the
 “ Birds to want, which only by *natural*
 “ *Instinct* trust in him, much more will
 “ he take care of you, who trust in him
 “ by choice, and glorify him by a *religi-*

"ous and rational Dependance. But if
 "ye will still be trusting to your own
 "Care, and place your only hopes there-
 "in, consider that how solicitous soever
 "ye are, how many and wise soever your
 "Projects are, they are all to no purpose,
 "except the Providence of God succeed
 "and bless them; without his Assistance
 "ye can no more add one Farthing to
 "your Estate, than one Cubit to your
 "Stature. And as for your Raiment,
 "observe the Flowers of the Earth, which
 "have no Thought of their Clothing, no
 "Care in the providing of it, and yet no
 "Furniture in *Solomon's* Court was so
 "beautiful and glorious. Now if God
 "bestows such Ornaments on the short-
 "liv'd Flowers of the Field, which are
 "but of a Day's continuance, ye must
 "have little Faith indeed to question his
 "Concern for you. 'Tis true, the igno-
 "rant Gentiles, who have Gods of Wood
 "and Stone, that cannot help them, and
 "who have neither an Interest in, nor
 "any just Notion of Happiness in a Life
 "to come, are with some shew of Rea-
 "son carking and solicitous for a Provi-
 "sion in this present World: but ye that
 "are my Disciples should know better.
 "Ye know that ye have in Heaven a
 "most compassionate and Almighty Fa-
 "ther,

“ther, who is thoroughly sensible of your
 “Wants, and able and willing to relieve
 “them. Ye are born to nobler Expecta-
 “tions than this World can answer; ye
 “have an Inheritance in eternal Glory,
 “that requires your best Affections, and
 “your greatest Diligence. Employ your
 “Care then in the first place by a Life of
 “Righteousness, to secure an Interest in
 “that future State of Glory; and such a
 “Care shall be so far from occasioning
 “any want of *temporal Necessaries* (tho’
 “it divert you from an eager and anxious
 “Solicitude about them) that the Provi-
 “dence of God will upon that very ac-
 “count more especially concern it self to
 “provide for and supply you with them.
 “Look not therefore too far forward;
 “every Day has its own Trouble and
 “Molestation, and why should ye anti-
 “cipate the Cares and Sorrows of many
 “Years to come, which it may be ye
 “may never feel, or if ye do, it will be
 “soon enough in its own Season; and to
 “partake of them sooner is to double
 “your own Burden, and to suffer twice
 “under the same Evil.

In the further Explanation of this Para-
graph, I shall shew,

I. The

I. The full Extent of the Precept; that we should not lay up Treasures on Earth, but lay them up in Heaven.

II. The Force of all those Arguments distinctly, which our Lord makes use of here to strengthen it.

I. The full Extent of the Precept; which will best appear, by considering each Branch of it apart: As,

First, What is included in the Negative, the thing which is here forbidden us, *laying up Treasures on Earth*. And this having in it several Degrees of Evil; and every one of them by it self being an Offence against the Precept, as well as *all of them together*, it will be necessary to trace them step by step, if we would be exact in our Discovery.

(1.) First then, there may be *too great an Opinion* of the *Worth* and *Excellency* of earthly Treasures; a vain Notion of the *Sufficiency* of these things to make a Man happy; and this either proceeds from, or produces (for it is necessarily attended with) cold and slighty Apprehensions of true spiritual Happiness, the Pleasures of Religion, and the Expectations of a Life to come. The Worldling has *heard* indeed of the Comforts which pious Souls take

take in the Contemplation of God's Love to them, and the Exercise of their own to God; he has been *told* of a most delightful Entercourse with Heaven in Prayer, and Praises, and receiving the Holy Sacrament: but these Employments being spiritual, and he a Stranger to them, it passes all for meer Enthusiasm, or at least his Ideas of the Delight that is to be found in them are confused, and faint, and ineffectual. He has been taught, and *pretends* to believe many glorious things of a Felicity immense and everlasting, reserv'd beyond the Grave, for the Spirits of just Men made perfect; but the Futurity and Distance of them is such, that even their Greatness and Eternity do very little move his Affections. Whereas this present World and its Enjoyments are at hand, the Reality of them is visible, and the Impressions they make upon him strong, as they are the Objects of Sense: the Nature of them is suited to a corrupt and carnal Heart, at *Enmity with God*, and earnestly seeking Happiness in *it self*, or any thing rather than in *him*. He finds them in esteem with almost every body, the daily Conversation turns upon them, and the common Endeavours of Mankind are center'd in them: which puts a mighty Bias on his

his Ju
prese
dation
of the
regar
Instr
Pom
the l
them
tion
Conf
ces a
cessa
with
gum
side
duca
for
to h
the l
in ra
mar
The
of h
mon
Pro
into
wer
Ido
bea
(th

his Judgment, to approve and admire what presents it self under so many Recommendations. As this is true of the *Enjoyments of this World* in general, so is it also with regard particularly to *Riches*, the grand Instrument of procuring all the rest. The Pomp and Hospitality of the Great, with the Respect and Honours that are paid them, cannot but draw a secret Veneration to that Wealth of which they are the Consequents. The ordinary Conveniences and Comforts of Life, nay even Necessaries of it too, being not to be had without Money, is a most sensible Argument with Men to value it. And beside all this, the very Precepts of their Education prepare them in favour of it: for the Father leaves a plentiful Portion to his Son, and telling a grave Story of the Labours and Hazards he underwent in raising it, gives him strict Charge, and many Directions for the Improvement. The Master, together with the Mysteries of his Trade, instructs his Servant in the more secret ones of unreasonable Gain and Profit. And thus Posterity falls of course into the vain Sentiments of those that went before, and Money is become the Idol of the World. Now that this overbearing *Opinion* and *Admiration of Riches* (tho' it were possible it should proceed

no farther) is *sinful*, appears, in that it carries with it (as I observed above) a Disregard and Disesteem of spiritual things; 'tis a formal Decision (tho' a very base and false one) that Earthly Treasures are more valuable than Heavenly; that the Interests of this World are preferable to those of another, that Money is better than Religion, and Mammon a more useful and a more powerful Friend than God. It ascribes a Sufficiency in the Creature, which can be only found in the Creator, and draws us into other wicked and dangerous Notions: for those who think so highly of Riches, will look upon Poverty with Contempt, on the Duty of Self-denial as a Jest, and on a State of Affliction as a certain Mark of God's Disfavour; tho' the Holy Scriptures, in every Part of them, teach us quite the contrary Doctrine. A Christian therefore (if he will obey this Precept of our Saviour) ought to esteem Riches, and all other worldly Enjoyments, only according to their *true* Use and Value, without regard to popular Maxims, or to the Passions and Appetites of corrupted Nature. For I deny not that the things of this World, and Money as well as any thing else, have something of a Value in them; the Danger is in over-
rating

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.*

223

rating them. They have a *Goodness*, but not an *Excellence*; they are in some measure necessary to the *Comfort and Convenience of Human Life*, but by no means sufficient to a *real and rational Happiness*. Hitherto we have considered the Opinion only, and the Esteem of Earthly Treasures; but it seldom stops here, the next Step is naturally,

(2.) A *Coveting and Desire* of what appears so excellent to a carnal Mind. Not that Men do always proceed herein in an argumentative way, examine first the Advantages of Riches, conclude them valuable, and then desire them: but being habitually inured to an high Opinion of these things, they desire them at the same time by a sort of moral Instinct, as they do their Food by a natural Appetite. Yet it is nevertheless distinctly to be considered here, as one Step farther towards the *laying up Treasures upon Earth*; and if the Esteem of those Treasures be sinful, the *Desire* of them is still a greater Sin, because it is an Error of the *Affections* added to an Error of the *Judgment*. And that it is indeed an Error of the *Affections*, will appear by this Consideration, that whenever it prevails as a ruling Principle in the Heart, 'tis *inconsistent* with the *Love of God*. For so we are taught by
St.

1 John 2. 17. *St. John, Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World: If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him. If therefore the Love of God be a Duty (as sure it is, if either Religion, Reason, or Gratitude can make it so) the Love of Riches, which so effectually undermines and overthrows it, that 'tis impossible one Heart should hold them both together, must needs be a very grievous Sin. And because it does more than any thing debauch the Mind from God, and sets up this World as an Idol in competition with him, 'tis call'd Idolatry in the inspired Language of St. Paul. Add to this, that the same Apostle, St. Paul, has declared it to be the Root of all Evil; and what he means by that, his own Words immediately foregoing will explain to us:*

1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. *For they that will be rich fall into Temptations and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition. Where this exorbitant Love of Money is indulged, it breaks down all the Bounds and Fences of Conscience, and hurries Men with loose Reins into any Sin whatever, that may forward their obtaining of it. What vile Hypocrisy, Dissimulation, and Flattery; what Lewdness, what Lying and Cheating, what Oppression and Treachery; what*

wha
oth
daily
justl
baste
surel
Seed
very
sever
fire
Exa
Matt
er sti
such
forbi
that
to di
of At
even
and t
be u
the T
or in
are th
mong
Solom
to bes
such.
is not
as att
rences
Vo

what Perjuries, Murders, Treasons, and other enormous Villanies, are chargeable daily upon this prevailing Passion? So very justly has Solomon observed, *He that makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.* And surely that which thus abounds with the Seeds of every other Sin, must it self be a very great one. Yet perhaps we are not severely to understand this of every Desire of Riches; tho' to distinguish with Exactness how far we may go in this Matter, is somewhat difficult, and harder still to regulate our selves in Practice by such a Distinction. St. John, when he forbids us to *love the World, and the things that are in the World*, could never design to discharge us *absolutely* from all manner of Affection to any thing here; for then even *natural Affection to our Relations*, and the Delight we take in them, would be unlawful. Nor can all Degrees of the *Desire of Riches* be included in that, or in any other Prohibition: for Riches are the Gift of God, and reckoned up amongst the Blessings of his Providence to Solomon; and surely what God thinks fit to bestow as a Blessing, we may desire as such. The Desire of Riches, therefore, is not *simply* and *absolutely* criminal; but as attended with certain vicious Adherences, from which 'tis very hard to purify.

rify it. Remove what is *evil* in it, and it becomes lawful. Now one Evil of it, as we have seen by the Antithesis in that Text of St. *John* last cited, lies in this, that it draws us *from the Love of God*, by suffering the World and its Enjoyments to usurp a Sovereignty in our Hearts, which is and can be due only to *Him*, as our Supreme Good. Another Evil (pointed out by St. *Paul*) is the *Impetuosity* of that Desire, leading us into abundance of Sins to accomplish it, as Fraud, Violence, Oppression, Treachery, Neglect of Religion, &c. To make the Desire of Riches lawful then, it must be so purified, as to be thoroughly consistent with those two fundamental Duties, the *Loving of God above all things*, and *our Neighbour as ourselves*. Let us but make sure in the first place, that GOD remain still the Sovereign Object of our Affections; that our Desire of Riches be not any the least Diminution of our Love of Him, nor any way divert us from an Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness; that whatever we obtain of earthly Treasures, we be ready and willing to part with them all, if there be Occasion, for the sake of Religion; and that our principal aim in desiring them, be not the Gratification of our own covetous Fancy, but sincerely and really

the

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 227

the glorifying God by good Works of Piety and Charity. Let us also be strictly careful, that it lead us not one Step awry to the Prejudice of our Neighbour, that we entertain not one Thought of getting them by sinful Methods, or using them to dishonest and unworthy Purposes. And lastly, that we desire them not, but in a cool and moderate way, scarce one Degree above Indifference, and with a constant and entire Submission to the Will of God, whether we obtain them or not: And *then* perhaps there may be no Harm in the Desire of Riches. I say, if all this be *practicable*, and the Desire be thus *in Fact restrained and regulated*, I shall make no scruple of granting, that the Prohibition in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, and others to the same purpose, do not reach it. But if on the contrary, it appear (as I believe it will) *impracticable*, through the common Corruption of our Nature, the Strength of our Passions, and the Difficulty of attending at once to so many nice and burdensome (however necessary) Limitations; we must look upon the Desire of Riches as a *forbidden Appetite*, and correct all Motions toward it as sinful; confining our selves to that discreet Petition of *Agur*, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but*

feed me with Food convenient for me. For I would have it observed here, once for all, that I am not speaking against the Desire of so much of this World as is necessary for the due Support of our selves, and those that depend upon us, or such a Provision for them as is suitable to the Rank and Station wherein God has placed us: But I speak of *Riches* or *Superfluity* and *Abundance*, the Notion of which is to be measured by Mens other Circumstances. And in judging of this, every Man for himself, there must be a strict and careful Impartiality; that we do not first by our Pride presume upon an higher Rank than really belongs to us, and create *imaginary Necessities* thereupon, and then pretend to justify our *Covetousness*, in Order to support our *Vanity*: But let us form a true and modest Judgment of our Station, and desire no more than that Station really calls for. I must now go on to,

(3.) The third Degree or Instance of laying up Treasures upon Earth: And that is the *actual Labour* and *Pursuit in obtaining them*, solicitously projecting in the several Arts and Methods for that Purpose, contriving all possible Ways, and putting the Scheme in Execution, with a perfect Drudgery of Diligence, and laying hold of

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 229

of all Opportunities to grow rich. This follows upon the Desire of Riches: For what a Man desires he endeavours to compass, and the Desire still encreases with the Endeavour, and the Endeavour is again more vigorous in Proportion to the Desire, so that the Thing is infinite, and there is no End of coveting and procuring Riches. I am sensible, that the Matter treated of here, will need greater Caution than the former: For tho' the *Desire of Riches* may with some Limitations be *lawful*, it is in no Case enjoined as a *Duty*, and therefore may be let alone without offending, whereas Industry (the Subject of our present Question) tho' it may in some Cases and Degrees be unlawful, yet in some also, and indeed, in general, it is a Duty, a positive Part of our Religion, and the contrary to it *Sloth* and *Idleness*, a notorious Sin. The *Proverbs of Solomon* are very copious on this Head, and the *New Testament* Inspiration is not behind-hand in this Matter. St. Paul has delivered a general Canon, that if any Man will not work, neither should he eat, and presses his own Example, *who wrought* 1 Thes. 3. 8, 10. with Labour and Travel Night and Day, to maintain himself. And amongst his Exhortations to the *Romans*, this is one, that they should not be *slothful in Business*. Rom. 12.

Our Saviour, tho' he whip'd the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, yet he did not out of their Shops; but *honoured* laborious and honest Professions, by choosing Disciples of such Employments. The Labour therefore which we are here speaking against, as sinful, is to be distinguished from honest Industry.

(1.) In the *Object* of it, *Riches* and *Abundance*. If we look back to the primitive Institution of Labour, we find it enjoined us in Part of *Punishment* for *Adam's* Disobedience. From whence 'tis very plain, the Design of it could never be to supply us with *Power* and *Riches*. But *what* was the proper and appointed Object of our Labour by that Sentence, the Words of it sufficiently intimate, *In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat thy Bread*. We were not bid to labour, that we might engross as much of the World as we could get; but to procure thereby the *Necessaries of Life* for our selves, and those that depend upon us; including such a Provision for the future, as may put our Children into a Way of living, by Trades or Professions, suitable to the Rank we bear. If any more be aim'd at, it must be only the glorifying God, and doing Good to others by Works of Charity, according to that Rule of St. Paul,

Gen. 3.
19.

Let

CHAP. XI. Treasures upon Earth. 231

*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather Eph. 4.
let him labour, working with his Hands the 28.
Things which is good, that he may have to
give to him that needeth. Or as it is ex-
pressed upon another Occasion, that our Ab-
undance may be a Supply to the Want of o- 2 Cor. 8.
thers. But this is a Design too general for 14.
a narrow-spirited and selfish World to think
of; and yet I dare be bold to affirm, that
for such good Offices ought all the Endeavours
of Encrease, and the Command of
Riches, chiefly to be intended. Works of
Charity, and the Promoting and Propagating
true Religion, are the only warrantable
Views of Labour that I know of. But
where the Design is merely the raising of
an Estate, or the scraping together so much
Money, let the Methods by which they
pursue it, be never so honest, their Improvement
never so just, the End denominates the Action,
and it becomes unlawful. I fear this will be
thought a very hard Saying, by those (even better
Men than ordinary) that are in a Way of
growing rich, and have hitherto pleased
themselves with the Fairness and Integrity
of the Means they use to become so, and
never questioned that in the Use of such fair
Means, they might lawfully get as much as
ever they could; to these it will be an hard
Saying, but who*

can help it? The Precept is very plain, *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth*; so plain, that one would think it equally impossible to be unobserved or evaded, by what political Glosses soever the Covetousness of Men may think to interpret away a Command, that lies so directly against them. But farther, Labour may become sinful not only by its *Object*, but, (2.) By *Excess in the Measures* of it, by a too great Eagerness and Intenseness in labouring even for a lawful End, the Necessaries of Life, and much more for an unlawful Object, Riches and Abundance. I call it excessive, when it either breaks the Health, or so takes up our Time from the Service of God, as to draw us into a Neglect of the necessary Duties of Religion, in public, in private, or with our Families. Whenever it thus loosens our Affections, or withdraws us from the daily Practice of Prayer, Meditation, and reading of the Word of God, 'tis no longer laudable Industry, but sinful Labour. *Martha* was undoubtedly well employ'd as to the End of her Diligence, when she was preparing an Entertainment for our Saviour, yet see how he rebukes her in Favour of her Sister *Mary*, who was more intent in hearing his

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 233

his Divine Instructions, and minding the spiritual Concerns of her own Soul.

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and Luke 10.
troubled about many Things; but one Thing 41, 42.
is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good
Part which shall not be taken away from
her. I proceed now (as those busy World-
lings usually do, of whom I am speaking)

(4.) The fourth and last Particular prohibited, the *hoarding up of Treasures when acquired.* Not caring to expend, but keeping together all they have gotten; either from a Vanity of *meer Possession*, to please their Eye, and entertain their Fancy; or by Way of Reserve against the Possibilities of *future Want*; or upon the Project of *leaving much Wealth to their Children*, to advance and render them more considerable in the World. Now the first of the Cases will be allowed, by all that are not concerned in it themselves, to be sinful. Men generally speak ill of those covetous Wretches that lay up Money out of a base Affection to the Coin, that with such Delight count their Cash and review their Securities, it goes against the Heart of them to part with any Thing, but in a Way of Usury and Increase, and are so far from doing any Good with it to their Neigh-

Neighbourhood, by Hospitality or Charity, that they almost starve their own Families, in the midst of this Abundance. There is no Need, I say, of convincing the *Generality* of Men, that this is sinful and prohibited; but those that are guilty of the Practice, want to be convinc'd, and they may be so, if they will but compare it with those positive Texts of Scripture, wherein God, who is still the direct Proprietor of all their Wealth, prescribes to them what they shall do with it. The Paragraph we are upon expressly forbids them to *lay it up*, or keep it as an useless Treasure by them. St. Paul orders Timothy to charge them that are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And St. Peter charges them to use Hospitality one to another without grudging. And it is elsewhere declared, that if any Man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own House, he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. But here perhaps the third Class of Men (who pretend to be laying up for their Children) taking Advantage of this last cited Text, will think themselves not only fairly acquitted, but even value themselves upon laying up Treasures, as discharging a Duty instead of com-

1 Tim. 6.
17, 18.

1 Pet. 4.9.

1 Tim. 5.
8.

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 235

committing a *Sin*. 'Tis fit we should consider this Matter a little more carefully, for no Mistake is so fatal as betwixt Sin and Duty. Let them then, in the first Place, examine well their own Consciences, whether their Design and End in laying up, is really the *Benefit of their Children*, or whether it be not rather the indulging a Vanity of their own, their Love of Money? 'Tis possible they may deceive themselves. If while they pretend to be doing this for their Children, they hoard up Treasure to leave them *only when they die*; and will either not bestow any due Proportion of it in the mean Time, in giving them a liberal and advantageous Education; or not enable them by handsome Settlements upon Marriage, or Encouragements that may forward 'em in a Way of Business, to live comfortably and creditably in the World at present; I will venture to determine, that (let them pretend what they will) their *Children's Benefit* is not the Principle by which they are acted, but their own *covetous Fancy*. In the next Place, supposing they are in Earnest, and that the Wealth they are laying up, is all design'd to make their Children rich and great, to raise a Family, and advance them much above the Rank they were born to, this can
ne-

never be justified by that Text they cite for it; 'tis not such a *providing for one's own*, as the Apostle speaks of. He is considering the Case of Widows maintain'd by the public Charity, and directs as a Thing highly equitable, that such of them as have Relations able to take Care of them, should not be *cast* upon the Church for a Maintenance, but supported at the private Charge of those Relations. And this is plainly in the prime Intention and Scope of the Context, what the Apostle means by *providing for our own*, the relieving of our poor Relations, that they may not be chargeable to the public. But if we will needs interpret it, of laying up Fortunes for our Children (which has not the least Connection with his Argument) it cannot reasonably be extended farther, than that beside what is necessary to their *present Maintenance and Education*, we should endeavour to leave them *so much, as joyn'd with their own Industry, in a Way of Business suitable to our Rank, may probably secure them from Want*. Thus far, I doubt not, the laying up something for Posterity is a Provision fit to be made (and if it be in our Power to accomplish it) a *Duty* too. If it be objected, that this is still *laying up*. I answer, that our Saviour speaks only against laying up
Rich,

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 237

Riches or *Treasures*, viz. more than the Condition and Degree God has placed us in requires : But what is really *necessary* to the Support of that Condition, does not fall under that Prohibition ; so that this may be laboured for and laid up without Scruple, a due Proportion of it being disposed in Charity. Nor do I deny, that where the Providence of God does *extraordinarily* bless a moderate Industry, or pours in a great Accession of Wealth *without our seeking*, we may innocently leave this to our Children (provided still that our Charities encrease together with our Abilities) and by this, they may honestly be raised to a Station, higher than that to which they were born ; but this is not properly *OUR laying up*, and therefore does not fall within a Prohibition, which only concerns our Worldly-mindedness and Love of Riches.

Let us now consider the *other* Case mentioned under this Head, the laying up by way of *Reserve against the possibilities of future Want*. And here also I deny not, that a prudent Provision for the *future*, as well as present Supply of our selves in Things that are *necessary* to Life, or the Comforts of it, is lawful. So Solomon advises, *Go to the Ant, thou* Prov. 6. *Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise : 6, 8.*

Which

Which provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest. But then we are to do it without any *uneasie* Solicitude, without trusting in Riches, or distrusting the Divine Providence, with a Freedom in using at present what we possess, so far as is necessary and suitable to our Condition; and with a liberal Distribution to the Poor, that we defraud not *them* of what God has laid up for them in our Hands. But here perhaps it may be enquired, whether *all* laying up for the future, be not a Distrust of the Providence of God? I answer, No: Because his Promises, as they are declared to us in his Holy Word, are the Rule and Measure of our Trust. Now God has no where promised to sustain, and provide for those that undo themselves by Sloth, or Thoughtlessness, or Extravagance; and therefore to depend upon him in such a way, is Presumption, instead of Trust in God. And on the contrary, to provide for our future Living, by the Measures of reasonable Frugality, and common Prudence, and with a serene and easy Mind, is so far from a distrust of God's Providence, that it is really trusting in him in the way that he requires; that is, in the moderate use of Means, and not in dependence

dance upon unpromised Miracles. 'Tis unhappy, that we know not how to keep out of Extremes, that we know not how to be *Frugal* without being *Penurious*, nor *careful* without *Anxiety*, nor *easy* without being *Careless*, nor *liberal* without *Extravagance*; and yet these are Distinctions that must be practically made, or else we confound the Differences of Vice and Vertue, Sin and Duty. And thus I have endeavoured largely to explain, what our Saviour means here by laying up Treasures upon Earth, and to distinguish as justly as I could, in what Particulars and Degrees the Sinfulness of it does consist. I have been the larger upon it, because this Prohibition seems generally to be misunderstood, or not considered in Practice, even by those who are esteemed very good Men, who (as if there was no such Precept in the Christian Religion) take it for granted, that they may procure as much of the Treasures of this World, as honestly they can, and do accordingly lay up in Store for themselves and their Posterity, and commend those who do the same, under the Character of notable and thrifty; who join House to House, and lay Field to Field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the Earth.

But

But such as are really good Men, and desire to govern their Consciences, and their Practice by the Direction of God's Word, will I hope be convinced by what has been said, that this Precept lays a restraint upon Men's *overvaluing, desire, pursuit of, and laying up* of Riches.

I proceed now,

Secondly, To shew what is meant by *laying up Treasure in Heaven*, which is the *positive* Part of the Precept in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon. The Meaning thereof in general is, that we should make it our chief Endeavour to secure to our selves an Interest in the Love of God, and the Inheritance of a blessed Eternity; and so it is in Truth, an Exhortation to all and every Duty, that lies in a Christians way to Heaven, but it seems more especially to include, and to be understood of these Three.

(1.) *Faith*, or a firm Belief of the infinite (tho' as yet invisible) Glories reserved in Heaven for those who love and obey God. And this is both the *Duty*, and the *Comfort* of a Christian; 'tis this important Secret that bears up his Spirits, carries him through all the Storms of Life, with a serene and chearful Temper. *He is troubled on every side, yet not distressed; he is perplexed, but not in despair.* Los-

ses

ses and Misfortunes follow one upon the Neck of another; Poverty presses hard upon him, Disappointments blast and baffle him, Contempt is daily treading on his Heels, Insults and Injuries meeting him at every Corner, long Sickness consumes his Body, or sharp and violent Pains torment it, Slanders and Malice wound his Reputation, and a great variety of Evils exercise his Patience. What is it therefore that supports him under all these Tryals, but the Hopes that Heaven will make amends at last: *For this* ^{2 Cor. 4: 16, 17, 18.} *Cause, says St. Paul, we faint not, but tho' our outward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day. For our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory; While we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen, for the Things which are seen are Temporal, but the Things which are not seen are Eternal.* I need not prove such a Faith to be our Duty, the Apostle having declared in a few Words, that *whosoever cometh to God* ^{Heb. 11:} *must believe that he is, and that he is the* ^{6.} *Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* And that this Duty is included in this Precept, of *laying up Treasures in Heaven*, is plain by visible Connection. I proceed

Vol. 2. R there.

therefore to the second Duty implied in it.

(2.) *Heavenly Mindedness*; or a Sovereign and prevailing Esteem of spiritual Things, the Blessedness of Heaven, and the Religion that prepares us for it, above all worldly Business or Enjoyments whatsoever. Under this Head we suppose the Christian in a *smooth* and *prosperous* State; the Riches of the World, and perhaps the Honour of it too, the Respect and Friendship of all about him, the innocent Pleasures and Comforts of this Life; and in a word, the Bounty of an indulgent Providence, attending and blessing him on every side. And he that in these Circumstances can keep his Eye fixed upon a better World to come, that pursues the Interest of his *Soul*, with a more deep and real Concern than any *secular* Interest; that does in Choice and Affection seriously prefer the Delight of glorified Spirits (praising and adoring God to all Eternity) before the most agreeable of the earthly Pleasures and Diversions, that offer themselves to his Enjoyment here, and does accordingly entertain himself with a truer Relish in the Contemplation of those blessed Hopes, in practising to improve himself in a devout and holy Love of God, and tuning his Heart before-hand

hand to celestial Praises, and exercising himself to Godliness in the several Duties of Religion, than in either the Grandure, or the Wealth of this World, or in any Thing else that pleases or employs him in it; he that does thus, may properly be said to *lay up Treasures in Heaven*, for his Heart is there already, and in so doing performs the Duty enjoyn'd here by our Saviour, which St. Paul has well explained to this Purpose, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, *Set your Affections on Things above; and not on Things on the Earth.* Col. 3. 2.

(3.) The third and last Duty which I shall insist on, as particularly included in that of laying up Treasures in Heaven, is *Charity to the Poor*. The covetous Worldling thinks himself very wise in saving all that he can scrape together, in putting it out to Use, or hoarding it up in Bags, or purchasing Estates with it, and thinks all is *thrown away* that is given to relieve the want of the Poor, to feed the Hungry, to cloath the Naked, or release the Prisoner. But Time perhaps will shew, at least Eternity will, that this is a very great Mistake, and that he who is at the most Expence in Charity, lays up the largest and the most lasting Treasure. That very Money which

he seems to scatter about with such a careless Hand, is really put out at the highest Interest, and upon the best Security; *For he that hath Pity upon the Poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.* God is pleased to stand answerable for what is so disposed of, and tho' we can merit nothing from him by our Charity, or any other good Action (because we are under previous Obligations to it as a Duty) yet he has graciously encouraged us thereto, by assuring us that he will abundantly repay us, either *here*, by the blessing of his Providence to encrease the Remainder; or in a *better World*, by the Rewards of *Everlasting Happiness*. *Thou when thou makest a Feast*, says our Saviour, *call the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, the Blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: For thou shalt be recompensed at the Resurrection of the*

Just St. Paul also charging those that are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, puts them in Mind, that so to do is but laying up for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life. So that what we disperse in Works of Charity, is so far from being

Prov. 11.

25.

Luke 6.

38.

Luke 14.

13, 14.

1 Tim. 6.

18, 19.

being lost to us, or thrown away, that it is laid up for us, as a Fund or Treasure in Heaven, where we shall find it again, tho' not in Specie, yet in such returns of Happiness and Glory, as shall abundantly satisfy, and for ever bless us. And that what I have said upon this Subject is not only true, but is directly and intentionally within the meaning of our Saviour's Precept, is plain enough by his way of expressing it in St. Luke, where the Substance of this same Discourse is recorded, *Sell that ye have, and give Alms: Provide your selves Bags³³ which wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens, which faileth not, where no Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth.* And thus I have gone through my first general Head, and shewn the full Extent of this Precept in both Parts of it, that we should *not lay up Treasures on Earth*, and that we should *lay them up in Heaven.*

I come now to my

II. Second general Head, to shew the force of every distinct Argument our Saviour here makes use of against *laying up Treasures upon Earth.* And these may be reduced to Two Heads, such as respect the greedy Affections of Riches, and such

as relate to an uneasy and disquieting Provision for the future.

Such as relate chiefly to the Affection for, or Love of Riches: And these are,

(i.) The Uncertainty of Riches. Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal. To the same Purpose Solomon both exhorts and argues, *Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own Wisdom: Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? For Riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven.* And certainly, were we but disposed to be wise at the cost of other Peoples Experience, rather than our own, we should save our selves much Grief and Vexation, by setting only such a value upon the Possessions of this World, as we would upon Things we expect to lose, or to have taken from us. Do we not see, by how many Accidents those who had Riches, are on a sudden reduced to Poverty? By Fire, by Shipwrack, by Robbery, by the Villany or Misfortunes of a Bankrupt, what a mighty Alteration in our Circumstances may be made in Four and Twenty Hours? Christianity therefore, which is the truest Prudence,

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 247

dence, as well as the best Religion, teaches us to sit loose to all the perishing Enjoyments of this World. A Temper which St. Paul has eloquently described in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. *It remains,* ^{1 Cor. 7.} *that they who rejoice, be as tho^{29,30,31}* they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho^{29,30,31} they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it: for the Fashion of this World passeth away. And our Saviour warns us, that Treasures upon Earth are slippery and uncertain, vain, and easily lost; and because they are so, not worth a wise Man's laying up. But there are other Treasures that cannot fail us, and are not subject to any such Contingences: Treasures laid up in Heaven, are out of the reach of Violence or Chance; securing an Interest there, we have chosen that better Part, which shall not be taken from us. The Glories of another World are an Inheritance perfectly secure, a Kingdom which cannot be shaken; there and there only let our Hearts and Hopes repose themselves.

(2.) The second Argument is drawn from the ill Effect, which the laying up Earthly Treasures is like to have upon the Religion of our Minds; in alienating our Affections and Attention from the Service of God, and debauching the whole Heart,

our Time, our Care, and Industry, to the Service of Riches. *Where a Man's Treasure is, there will his Heart be also. No Man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* The Heart is the Seat of Affection, from thence flow Desire and Hope, and Fear and Joy, and all of that nature, and these all have their Propensity to Happiness; and therefore he who places his Happiness in the Abundance of the things of this World, the Motions of his Heart tend chiefly to those things; as on the contrary, he who places his Happiness in the Rewards of another World, the Operations of his Soul are influenced by the Expectations of such future Blessings, and the Heart desires spiritual things, and rejoices in the Hope of that glorious State which is to be revealed hereafter. Now the Belief and Hope of future things, in that State of Glory which Christ has revealed and promised, must of necessity much abate the inordinate Love and covetous Desire of treasuring up temporal things. And on the contrary, the laying up Treasures upon Earth will take off the Heart and Affection from Religion, and the Expectation of an

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 249

an Inheritance in the World to come. This was visible at the first preaching of the Gospel, when very few rich Men came into it. What a sad Shipwrack did the young Disciple make, who because he had great Possessions, and could not bear the Thoughts of parting with them, rejected the Salvation offered him, and laid aside his Pretensions to the Heavenly Kingdom. The Parable concerning the Excuses of those invited to the Feast, that one had married a Wife, another taken a Farm, and a third was to prove his new bought Oxen, was intended to expose the evil Consequences of worldly things, and the Prejudices they raise against the Invitations of the Gospel. And of the same nature also is the Parable of the Seed, which being scattered into the Stony Ground, which is a Mind overgrown with Cares, and the Desire of Riches, is rendered altogether unfruitful, and of no encrease. Nor does it only wean the Affections of a Man from the inward Power and Principle of Religion, but from the public Worship of God. It may be an odious Concession, and yet a true one, that *too many* of those that do frequent the Church, come thither not from any pious and devout Propensity to the Duties of the Place, or any fixed and serious

serious Regard to the Interest of their Souls, but for fashion sake, or other secret Ends of Hypocrisy: and yet these People, (how great soever their Sin may be in the Sight of God, which they must certainly answer for to him) do however pay an outward Complement of Respect, by frequently appearing there. But the Atheism of a worldly minded Man, whose Time and Thoughts are so enslaved to the Pursuit of Riches, that he can very seldom find in his heart to spare one Hour or two in a Day to wait upon the Service of God in public, is the worse Offence of the two, because he passes an open Slight upon Religion, and his Neglect is scandalous. We shew our Love to God in our public Acknowledgments of him, in praying to him and praising him in Christian Assemblies; and I shall not scruple to affirm, that all Christians are bound, where they have Opportunity, and no unavoidable Impediment, to worship God in the Offices of the Church, in the Use of which, the greater the Company, the more available the Devotion. But I must charge it upon the Love of Riches, and the solicitous Endeavours of Men for the Treasures of this World (amongst other Causes) that there is so visible and so scandalous a Neglect of the Service of God

God in public; so that while the World has many Servants, God has but a few: and thus it will be while earthly Treasures engross our Love, our Care, and Diligence.

2. I proceed now to those Arguments, which our Saviour uses against an *uneasy and disquieting Provision for the future*. And by these he does not argue against a moderate and prudent Care to provide what is necessary for our selves, and such as depend upon us, but only labours to take us off from an undue *Perplexity, Sollicitude, and Distrust of God's Providence, in our Care about such things*. He argues therefore,

(1.) From the merciful Care which God takes of all his Creatures, even those of the lowest Rank, the most inconsiderable little Bird is provided for every day at the Expence of its Almighty Creator, and by the Superintendency of his Providence. Even the Grass and the Lillies of the Field, incapable of any Sollicitude for themselves, and unregarded by Human Care, spring up in their Season, and look fresh and beautiful, and are more finely clothed by the Great God of Nature, than Solomon was in all his Glory: and does God concern himself for Creatures that are so much below us, which can only glorify him

him accidentally, not intentionally, by our Reflection upon them, not their own, and whose very Beings are design'd to perish within a little time? and dare we not trust him with the Care of us and ours, whom he has made in a more excellent Species, qualified with more direct Capacities to serve and praise him, formed for Eternity, Objects of his Grace in this World, and designed to be Heirs of Glory? Will he suffer us to starve, who will not let the meaner Parts of his Creation want what is necessary to their Support, or suitable to their Rank in the Creation.

(2.) A second Argument is, *We are not sure that all our Care will do the Business*; it is not certain of Success. A Man can no more add to his *Estate*, than to his *Stature*, tho' he be never so circum-spect and industrious, except it pleases God to bless his Industry, and forward his Increase. Why then should Men vex and torment themselves with the Projects and Designs of obtaining that which it may be God will never suffer them to possess and enjoy? And why should they not rather, with the moderate Use of Means, apply themselves to God by Prayer, and lay the stress of all their Hopes and Expectations upon his Bounty and Bless-

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 253

Blessing, not upon their own Solitude.

(3.) His third Argument is, that *after all these things the Gentiles seek*, the Gentiles, who knew not God nor his Providence; but had been trained up in Notions of a blind Chance and Fortune, which favour'd some and frown'd upon others, without any regard to Equity, and which yet their Poets taught them might be over-ruled by Prudence.

Nullum numen habes, si sit prudentia; sed te Nos facimus, fortuna, deam, cæloq; locamus.

So that a wise projecting Man might still (according to their Sentiments) have the Command of his Fortune. Such as these were carking and solicitous to provide for themselves, since Plodding and good Management were supposed to have such a commanding Stroke in the Event of things, and since their Religion was so far from teaching them Dependance on the wise and merciful Care of the Deity for their Relief, that Fortune (their supposititious Providence) was represented either as a thoughtless Chance, or an unjust and partial Being, and an Enemy to far the greater Part of Mankind. But *Jews*, to whom our Saviour spoke and *Christians*, for whose Direction and Support

port these Precepts and Arguments were intended, being enlightened by Revelation, should know better things. They, as they are convinced by their Religion, Reason, and Observation of the Superintendancy and Wisdom, the Power and Goodness of God in the Government of human Affairs, and of every Circumstance of our Lives, are inexcusable, if they do not trust in him, and depend upon him, or if they fret themselves into the same Perplexity that Heathens do on such an Occasion.

(4.) It may very well take the place of another Argument, that our Saviour here gives a formal and positive *Promise*, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, all the Necessaries of this Life shall assuredly be provided for us. The Generality of the World are mistaken in nothing more (and no Mistake can be more fatal) than in what they call *securing the main Chance*. They take it to be the getting Riches, or at least a competent Livelihood. Religion and the Interests of Eternity are considered (if at all) but as a second Rate Importance. But here our Blessed Saviour puts things in their proper Order, and shews that the Holiness of a Christian, and the Happiness of Heaven, are indeed the

the *main Chance* to be secured, and even the Necessaries of this Life are of far inferior Consideration: If we do sincerely make the *other* our chief Care and Request, and the glorifying God our principal Business and Endeavour, these shall be thrown in too *ex abundanti*, by the Mercy of a gracious God. And can we desire a better Security against Want than this? The Son of God engages here his Word and Honour, that the Pious Christian, who makes Religion his first and greatest Care, shall not need to be solicitous about temporal Necessaries, they shall certainly be supplied to him; he shall never want. Upon such Assurance we may safely rest, for Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away, than one Jot or Tittle of his Promise fail. Laying aside therefore all Anxiety about these Matters, let us in all our Straits still say with David, *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the Health of my Countenance, and my God.* Psal. 45: 11.

(5.) The concluding Argument is, that *sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof.* Tho' we should fix our selves to all the studied Calmness we are able, yet for our Sins the Providence of God has order'd

order'd such a Vicissitude in all things here, that something or other possibly may happen to try our Patience every day we live, or if it should not, the returning Wants and Necessities of Men will daily engage them in Cares and Business troublesome enough; so that it is a foolish thing for us to overcharge our present Hours (sufficiently burdened already) with the Fears and Fancies of the Time to come; of Wants which we may never suffer, of Sorrows and Disappointments which we may never meet with, and Provision for Age we may never live to, or for Children that may never live to enjoy it. We are exposed to unavoidable Trouble enough every day; let us endeavour to bear that, when it shall happen, as becomes us; but let us not be so absurdly greedy of Vexation, as to anticipate Troubles, which are yet at a distance, and are at most but Possibilities.

These are the Arguments our Saviour has thought fit to use, the Reasons he has given, why we should not lay up Treasures upon Earth. Thus far he has condescended to *perswade* us. But if we will not be *convinced* by him, we must nevertheless be *judg'd* by him: and whatever our Worldly Notions are of Policy and
Pru-

CHAP. XI. *Treasures upon Earth.* 257

Prudence, that Man will then appear the wisest, and shall prove the happiest, who has in this Life bent his Thoughts most seriously to another ; despising Riches, and committing himself, and all that belongs to him, to the good Providence of God by Faith, dispersing chearfully to the Poor, and labouring only to lay up Treasures in Heaven, which can never perish.



Vol. 2.

S

CHAP.



CHAP. XII.

Of CENSURE and of REPROOF.

MATT. VII. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

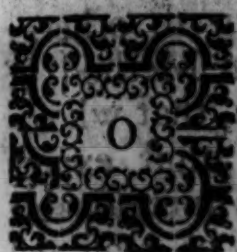
And why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy Brother, Let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye?

Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.

Give not that which is holy unto Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.

Out



OUR Saviour's Design in this Paragraph, is the same with most of the foregoing, to correct the *Jewish* Misinterpretations of the Moral Law. They found there a Command to *rebuke their Brethren, and Lev. 19. not to suffer Sin upon them.* From hence ^{17.} that proud, ill-natur'd People took the Liberty of censuring one another with the utmost Rigour; hoping by their affected Strictness in condemning what was ill in others, the better to conceal their own Vices. Thus we meet with a Pharisee censuring his Neighbour, even in his Prayers to God, *God, I thank thee, Luke 18. that I am not as other Men are, Extortio-^{11.} ners, unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.* This and some other Mistakes in the Duty of Reproof, our Saviour here endeavours to rectify, as tho' he should say,

" Be not rash and severe in your Cen-
 " sures. Do not readily give Ear to every
 " malicious Story, nor be apt your selves
 " to surmise the worst of other Peoples
 " Actions, lest ye provoke both God
 " and Man, to use you in Proportion as
 " ye have done your Neighbour: For
 " ye must expect from the Justice of God

" to be judged with the like Candour
 " or Rigour ye have shewn to others;
 " and such is the common Method of
 " proceeding amongst Men, that whoso-
 " ever gives no Quarter, must expect
 " none. But especially it is unreasonable
 " for those, who are guilty of gross and
 " scandalous Sins, (which often is the
 " Case) demurely to correct, reprove,
 " and exclaim against others for Faults
 " of little Concern, and hardly worth
 " the Notice: He who would reform a-
 " nother, must begin with himself, that
 " it may appear he reproves not out of a
 " censorious Humour, but from a real
 " Aversion to every Thing that is evil,
 " and a real Charity to the Offender,
 " and that he may set about it with
 " Discretion, and perform it with a de-
 " cent Authority. Nor is Reproof al-
 " ways proper, we must distinguish be-
 " tween such Persons as *are*, and such
 " as *are not likely to be amended by it*.
 " Some Men are so incorrigible, that it
 " would be cast away upon them, like
 " holy Things thrown to Dogs, and
 " Pearls to Swine. Nay, perhaps they
 " may rather be made worse than better
 " by it, not only despising but abusing
 " both your Advice and your Charity.
 " And in this Case you will only expose
 " your

“ your self, instead of reforming them.

In explaining of this Paragraph a little farther, let us consider more distinctly,

I. What Sort of Judging is here forbidden us?

II. The Necessity of amending our own Lives, in Order to the reforming of others.

III. The Meaning of this Advice, of not attempting Reproof where it is not likely to have a good Effect.

I. *What Sort of Judging is here forbidden us?* Were not Reproof a Duty incumbent upon every private Christian, as Occasion requires, I should not take these Words to be a Prohibition of *rash* and *severe censuring* only, but of meddling *at all* with other Mens Matters; and indeed when we do censure Men, tho’ never so justly, without designing them or Religion any Service by it, but only the gratifying our own malicious Temper, we certainly offend against this Precept. But beside the Necessity of a good Intention, as the Ground or only reasonable Pretence of all censuring of others, we must take Care that our Censures be not rash and severe, for such they are, if we either,

(1.) *Give Credit to every Thing that can be said ill of a Man.* There is not that Story which can be invented to the Disreputation of another, tho' never so groundless and improbable, (nay, I may say almost impossible) but some will greedily receive and swallow it. 'Tis an ill-natur'd easiness of Belief these People are guilty of: The Case is otherwise, when any Thing is told (whether false or true) to the Advantage of a Man: For then how difficult is the Credit, how lazily does it circulate? But these same Persons, who are cautious enough of being imposed upon by a Lye in *other* Matters, as thinking it a Reflection upon their Judgments, hardly ever question the Truth of a *Defamation*; and look upon it, as a sufficient Excuse, not only for believing, but reporting the most egregious Falshoods of this Kind, that indeed *they heard so*. They may deceive themselves and others, with a pretended Detestation of the Offence, and Concern for the Offender, but it really proceeds from a Pride of raising their own Reputation by the Ruin of another's. And this Vanity is an Encouragement to envious and malicious People, to *invent* Lyes of their Neighbours, because they know that most Men are very ready to believe and hearken to such Stories.

This

This is certainly one Instance of rash Judging. Another is,

(2.) *When we judge Men to be wicked, because they are unfortunate, because it has pleas'd God to afflict them with some Calamity.* This was the Error of Job's Friends, from which that upright Man endeavours to free them, by shewing them to be to blame in condemning a Man's Innocency by his Afflictions. And if it was a great Crime in them at that Time, it is much worse now a-days in Christians, yet is there no Practice more common. Some are so given to this Kind of Censure, that they cannot hear of any, the least Loss, befallen a Neighbour, but they presently suspect the Person guilty of some Crime, for which they tell you, this is a Judgment of God upon him. But St. Paul tells us, that *whom* Heb. 12. *the Lord loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth⁶ every Son whom he receiveth.* The Revelation of a future Judgment, and of Rewards and Punishments in another Life, makes this barbarous Custom, of adding to Peoples Afflictions, very unreasonable, and an Instance of rash Judging. Another is,

(3.) *When we make the worst of every Thing, which is really sinful in Mens Actions, or believe an Offender to be*

worse than he really is, when we condemn him as for an *Habit* only for a *single Act* of Sin: For certainly tho' *one profane Oath* discharged in Passion, or howsoever else, and the being *once drunk*, is Sin, and calls for a deep Repentance before God, yet is not a Man for one, or perhaps two or three Acts of these, committed in his whole Life, to be esteemed a *common Swearer* or *Drunkard*. If these Offences be against the general Course and Bent of his Life, 'tis very uncharitable to rank him hereupon amongst scandalous and habitual Sinners. In like Manner, when we magnifie a Fault above its true Nature and Degree, when we affect to blacken any wicked Act, with more Aggravations than can be fairly gathered from the Circumstances of it: Or when, because a Man lives in the Practice of some Vices, we presume him guilty of every ill Thing our uncharitable Suspicion may suggest against him: Or when, because a Man *has been* notoriously bad, we conclude him *always* so, and are unwilling to suppose he either *has* repented, or *will* or *may* repent. And as reducible to this Head, when we pretend to judge of the Eternal State and Condition of Persons deceased, without any good Assurance, which 'tis very hard, and in most Cases

show

Cases

Cases impossible for us to have, that they did not truly repent before Death, and are not received to Mercy. In all these Instances we are guilty of rash Judging. And so we are,

(4.) When we censure and condemn as *Evil*, an Action that is really in its own Nature *indifferent*, and may be either Good or Bad, as Circumstances (probably unknown, or at least not considered by us) may determine it. It may perhaps be somewhat that *borders* too near upon Evil, or is *easily abused* to Evil, but is not Evil in the Nature of the Thing, and therefore capable of two Interpretations. To instance only in *keeping Company, Gaming, Dressing, Dancing*, (and there are many others of this kind) which *may be* innocent Diversions, or they may be Crimes, according as they are used to good, or abused to ill Purposes, the Regularity, or the Misbehaviour in them, or according to the Time we spend upon them. To judge favourably of these, when Circumstances and Effects do make them criminal, is indeed to encourage Vanity and Vice: But on the other Hand, to censure them as Evil, tho' such Effects and Circumstances do not appear to render them so, is rash and severe Judging, Moroseness and

and ill Nature, not Religion. Or,

(5.) When we suspect a *good* Action of *Hypocrisy*. By good Actions, I here mean not only such as are *materially* Good, as the Practice of Family Prayer, frequenting the Church, receiving the Sacrament, giving liberally to the Poor, and, in a Word, all Works of Piety, Charity, Justice, and Temperance; but these Works attended also with such Circumstances, that to a candid and unprejudiced Judgment, they appear *formally* and *really* good, and this, or the other Man whom we would censure, seems to do them from an *inward Principle of Conscience* and *Sincerity*; nothing appearing to the contrary, either in his Performance of these, or in his general Character and Course of Life. For tho' 'tis possible, a Man may do any of these Things hypocritically, yet if he be not evidently guilty of some indulged, habitual Vice, that is inconsistent with sincere Religion, or of something peculiarly inconsistent with the goodness of that Action we pretend to judge of, we ought in Charity to presume the best of him, and that what he does, is not from any secret, corrupt, and wicked Principle, but from an honest Mind, and consequently his Action is *good*; and if we judge

judge otherwise of him and it, we judge *rashly*. Nothing is more hard to pry into, or pronounce upon, than the Sincerity of Men's Hearts, in the Discharge of their Duty; for we can only hear their *Words*, and see their *Actions*, without a possibility of looking farther into their *Thoughts*, to discover the Spring or Principle that moves them. The Heart may be deceitful indeed, and desperately wicked; but who can know it? God has told us by the Prophet *Jeremy*, Jer. 17. 9, 10. *I, the Lord, search the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give to every Man, according to his Ways.* And *Solomon* acknowledges, that God alone can do this, For Kings 8. 39. *thou, even thou only knowest the Hearts of all the Children of Men.* What Insolence is it then for us to pretend to that, which God alone can do, as well as *Impertinence* to judge of what we cannot know, and *Uncharitableness* to judge hardly, of what we have no apparent Reason to censure! Yet nothing is more common, than this censorious and unchristian Practice, of condemning good Actions for Hypocrisy, especially, where there is a secret Spleen to the Person that does them.

These five Instances I think include all, that is meant here by rash and severe

vere judging. Let us proceed now to the second general Head, to consider,

II. *The Necessity of amending our own Lives, in order to the reforming of others.*

This our Saviour directs as a Remedy against Censoriousness, and were it but effectually put in Practice, it would be a certain Cure: For we may observe, that, generally speaking, the *worst* Men are the most uncharitable this way. Notorious bad Men do it in hopes, that by representing the Vertues of good Men, to be only Grimace and Hypocrisy at the bottom, their own Wickedness may come off with the better Credit, as it may seem impossible to be really Good, and themselves the more generous Sinners of the Two, because they don't so much as *pretend* to Vertue. Proud Men, who desire to be thought better than the rest of the World, do it as an *easier way* to gain a Reputation, than by a solid and extraordinary Goodness; while all the Pretence is, the Reformation of those whom they censure; but whoever truly designs *that*, must begin at home, and resolve to set an Example of true Goodness in his own Character. To be sure, he must not be guilty of as great, or greater Sins, than those which he re-
proves

proves, for it is, (1.) *Ridiculous in it self*, for such a Man to reprove. Every Body he attacks has a Retortion ready for him, and his own Conscience will sharpen the Sting of it, and the World will laugh at him. For him that has a Beam in his own Eye, to find fault with a Mote in his Brother's, is such a visible Affectation, such an Overt-act of Hypocrisy, that it looks awkward and monstrous.

(2.) The Reproofs or Censures of such a Man, instead of reforming, will really *harden* the Sinner. There is a Spirit of Contradiction in human Nature, which strongly inclines and tempts Men to grow worse, rather than to amend, when upon the Comparison they find themselves still better Men (notwithstanding all their Faults) than him who undertakes to correct them. They plainly see, that he does it not from any Sense of Vertue, or real Opinion of the Enormity of Sin, but to give himself an Air of Demureness, and to fix a brand of Reproach upon them. So that such Reproofs entirely lose their Effect. And in Truth, on the other Hand, a Man that is given to Reproof, had need not only to be free from gross and scandalous Offences himself, but to be eminent and exemplary in Religion, nor only exemplary in a great

great Degree of that particular Vertue, the contrary to which he sets himself to correct in others, but to be well versed in *all manner of Goodness*, and govern'd by a thoroughly Christian Spirit. Because whoever undertakes this Duty of reproofing and reforming, can expect no Success, if he do not manage it with *Judgment*, Meekness and Charity, and all these he must be supplied with by Religion. (1.) It is to be managed with *good Judgment*. Every Sin deserves not the same measures of Reproof: Nor is a Person ever reclaim'd from any Sin by a Reproof improper for it, because it appears in this Case, that the Reprover is mistaken, and therefore a very improper Guide. But now a Knowledge of what Difference must be made in all our Reproofs and Admonitions, according to the Difference of the Sins reprov'd, is attainable no other way than by a perfect *Knowledge of our Religion*, that we may know what is commanded or forbidden; and in a *constant Practice of all the Duties and Vertues it requires*, that we may know to what Degrees they are practicable in this State of Infirmary, what may be effected by the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and what grains of Allowance must be

be made for the weakness of human Nature; all which will best be learnt by Experience in the Course of our own Christian Warfare, and the Observations we make upon our selves. (2.) Reproof is to be given with *Meekness*; for a passionate, morose, or reproachful way of giving it, will sooner exasperate than reform. And how shall we attain to such a Spirit of Meekness as is necessary in this Case, but by the effectual Influence of Religion upon our Minds, and a long practised Habit thereof, under the Conduct of God's Holy Spirit, and our own Endeavours. (3.) It is to be done with *Christian Love and Charity*: For tho' the Rebukes of an Enemy out of ill-will to reproach and defame, may notwithstanding help and reform a wise Man, yet the generality of Mankind are not to be reclaim'd, but by Admonitions that sensibly proceed from Love; they must be convinced, that what we say is really out of Kindness to them, before it will have any good Effect or Influence upon them, to amend their Lives. Now Charity is an high Attainment; St. *Paul* tells Rom. 13: us, that *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; ^{10.} so that if none but a charitable Man can effectually perform this Duty, the necessity of making great Advances towards

wards religious Perfection in our own Lives, in order to the qualifying us for the reforming of others, is very evident. But I shall now hasten to the third and last Particular to be considered.

III. The meaning of this Advice, of *not attempting Reproof, where it is not likely to have a good Effect.* Our Saviour here forbids to put the Gospel under Contempt, or our own Persons into danger, by reproving unreasonable and brutish Men, such as will either despise and ridicule the Reproof we give, or hate us for it, and perhaps assault and put us in danger of our Lives thereupon: Only here we must take care, that we do not impose upon our selves with deceitful Excuses, and in Truth this Care ought to be so much the greater, because we are apt to be very negligent and backward to this Duty of Reproof, looking upon it as an irksome and displeasing Thing to tell Men of their Faults, displeasing both to our selves and them. Yet is it not better for both to undergo a little Trouble in this kind, than perish eternally together, one for continuing in his Sin, and the other for not reproving him? We are likewise apt to excuse our selves, by confounding Censure and Reproof;

proof; we would not be thought to be proud, uncharitable and censorious Persons: But is there not a wide Difference between Pharisaical Censure, and the Reproofs of Christian Charity. With such Excuses however Men often deceive themselves, and neglect their Duty, throwing the blame upon the Obstinacy of the Sinner, while all the Fault is in their own Remissness. But if there be really no ground for Hope, if the Person appear to be incorrigible, if he hath frequently rejected our Admonitions before, or the Reproofs of wiser Men, if he be a Despiser of all Religion; if he be one, who is so far from being likely to be reclaim'd by our Reproof, as that he shall laugh at it, or clamour upon us, or affront us for it, we are so far from being required to spend our Admonitions upon him, that we are here forbidden so to do.





CHAP. XIII.

*Of Importunity in Prayer, and of
Doing as we would be done by.*

MATT. VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

*Ask, and it shall be given you : Seek, and
ye shall find : Knock, and it shall be open-
ed unto you.*

*For every one that asketh, receiveth : And
he that seeketh, findeth : And to him
that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

*Or what Man is there of you, whom if his
Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone?
Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Ser-
pent ?*

*If ye then being evil, know how to give
good Gifts unto your Children, how much
more shall your Father which is in Hea-
ven, give good Things to them that ask
him ?*

*Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would
that Men should do to you, do ye even*

so to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets

IN a former Paragraph, our Saviour gave us some Directions how to pray, cautioned us against Ostentation and vain Repetitions in our Prayers, and prescribed us a most excellent Form, in which we may address our selves to God. Here His Design is to press us to a *fervent* and *continual* Exercise of Prayer, not only as a Duty, but as a necessary and successful Means of obtaining at the Hands of God, all Blessings which we stand in Need of, temporal and eternal. And from God's dealing thus with us, like a tender Father, readily answering our Requests, of all Things needful for us, our Saviour takes Occasion to recommend the like affectionate Readiness amongst our selves, to all good Offices one towards another, doing freely for *others* what we our selves would think it reasonable they should in like Cases do for *us*. As if he had said,

“Whatsoever ye have Need of, apply
 “your selves to God for it by importu-
 “nate Prayer, and he will surely answer
 “your Petitions, either *in Kind*, the ve-
 “ry Thing ye desire, or at least *in Qua-*
 “lity,

" *lity*, something which he knows to be
 " really fitter for you, and that will be
 " more to your Advantage. 'Tis fit that
 " ye should own his Power and Provi-
 " dence, by such an Application; and those
 " who do, shall taste of his abundant
 " Goodness. But if ye will not, ye
 " may thank your selves for his with-
 " holding the Blessing from you. Or if
 " ye ask and have not, 'tis because ye
 " ask amiss. A faint and seldom Re-
 " quest is only begging a Denial; the
 " Majesty of Heaven expects to be wait-
 " ed on with frequent, earnest, and hum-
 " ble Petitions; an unwearied and re-
 " peated Diligence; and if ye thus sol-
 " licit him, he will not deny you, for
 " he has the Affection and Tendernefs
 " of a Father towards you. And what
 " earthly Parent is there, who, if his
 " Son ask of him any Thing necessary
 " for Life, will mock at the Request, by
 " giving him an useless or an hurtful
 " Thing? If then, Men, who are fin-
 " ful Creatures, passionate, weak and
 " humourfome, have yet the Tender-
 " ness to give their Children what is
 " good and fit for them; how much
 " more shall the infinite Goodness of
 " God, whose Children ye are, do so to
 " those who importunately pray to him
 " for

“ for it? Now as this Loving-Kindness
 “ of God is an Encouragement to Prayer,
 “ so it yields a Direction for your Conduct
 “ towards your Neighbour. Since God
 “ shews himself a compassionate Father
 “ to Mankind, in bestowing whatever
 “ they request that is really fit for them
 “ to have, ye ought to treat one another
 “ as Brethren, and do for others what-
 “ ever ye could reasonably expect they
 “ should do for you, were ye in their
 “ Condition and they in your’s: For this
 “ is the Sum and Substance of your Duty
 “ with Regard to Men, and of all that
 “ the Law and the Prophets have said
 “ upon it.

In this Paragraph, there are two distinct Parts worthy of our farther Consideration.

I. What Qualifications are requisite to make our Prayers prevailing; or what is included in the Notion of importunate Prayer.

II. What is the Nature and Extent of this Rule, of doing as we would be done by, which is here called the Law and the Prophets.

I. I shall begin with the first, the Qualifications necessary to make our Pray-

ers prevailing, or what is meant by *Importunity* in Prayer. Whatever View we take of our Condition, whether with Regard to Soul or Body, we find our selves in such a State of continual Dependance upon God, (the Exegencies of human Life so many, our own Inability to provide for them, so sensible and apparent) that one would think even the worst of Men should not need to be *excited* and *persuaded* to Prayer; yet it seems the best of Men do need not only *Perswasion* but *Encouragement* to this Duty. The Reason is, because tho' they know their Wants, and that God, and He alone, is *able* to supply them, they are conscious of so much Sin in themselves, that naturally (and without a Mediator) they have Reason to fear He *will not* hear them. *Christ* therefore, our great and only Mediator, as in other Places assures us of his Intercession, does here excite and encourage us to apply unto God, with Assurances that if we do *we shall be heard*. But then 'tis expected our Prayers should be *importunate*, that we may shew the deep Sense we have of our own Wants, our real Desire that God would hear us, and our steddy Expectation that he will. In Order to be accepted then, we are to pray with *Earnestness*, and
with

with Continuance or Perseverance, both which are included in Importunity.

First, Then we must pray with Earnestness. And this consists chiefly in these two Things, Attention and Affection.

(1.) In Attention. When we present our selves before the infinite Majesty of Heaven and Earth, to offer up our Praises and Petitions to him, what an Insolence is it to trifle in that awful Presence; to have our Eyes gazing about on every Object that may divert them; our Thoughts as little interested in what we say, as if we were repeating only an idle Charm? It is not enough surely to hurry over a Form of Words in Prayer, our Minds must consider and attend to every Sentence with a close and serious Application. Divine Worship is the Exercise of many Graces, the Exercise of Faith and Hope, Humility and Love. And how can we exercise these when our Minds are unconcerned? For these Graces are seated in the Soul, which is only able to recollect and consider. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit*, with the inward Attention of their Minds, as well as the outward Posture of their Bodies, and Motion of their Lips. This therefore being

so necessary a Qualification of Prayer, yet such withal, as even the best disposed Minds find it hard enough to secure, it has been thought very proper and good Advice, that before we go to Prayer, we should employ a few Minutes in Preparation for that Duty, to recollect, compose, and fix our Thoughts, and place them upon the right Object, and restrain them to it, because Variety of Business and Objects, and Circumstances, are very apt to fill our Heads with a confused Train of Imaginations, which impertinently distract, and through the Infirmary of human Nature are not easily withstood by us. This certainly requires Care and Diligence in the *best of Men*; but let the Difficulty of Attention to such as these, be no Excuse for the profane and careless. There is a great deal of Difference betwixt the Distractions in Prayer, which good Men *cannot* avoid, and those which bad Men do not so much as *strive against*, or *endeavour to avoid*. The former are properly Failings and Sins of Infirmary, and will be pardoned, by a merciful God, as such, because they are *involuntary*; but the Carelessness of an irreligious Mind that *freely gives into* Distractions and vain Thoughts at such a Time, and allows the Eye to gaze about
at

at random, and (which is too often the Case) when, instead of joining in the Prayers and Praises of the Congregation, People are reading Letters, talking over News, whispering Remarks upon others, laughing, and giving themselves Airs, or the like. This, I say, is a gross Piece of Profaneness, 'tis no Infirmary, but a wilful Sin, a Contempt of the Presence of God, and a solemn Ridicule of all Religion. But,

(2.) Sincerity or Earnestness consists also in the *feruent Exercise of the Affections*: So St. Paul requires, that we should be *feruent in Spirit, serving the Lord*. Rom. 12. And Solomon in the Name of God speaks^{11.} thus, *My Son, give me thine Heart*. It^{Prov. 23. 26.} is the HEART which God especially requires in all the Services of Religion, and particularly in the Offices of Devotion: for without this our Prayers are but as a *sounding Brass* and as a *tinkling Cymbal*; not only not acceptable, but grating and provoking to the Great God, to whom we speak. We are not only to know and mind what we say in Prayer, but our *sincere Desires* are to go along with every Petition, an *affectionate Thankfulness* with every Clause of our Praises, and a *devout Reverence*, and *Impressions* *suitable to what is said*, with every Acknow-

knowledgment of the awful Attributes of
 God therein. It is a mocking of God to
 pray for what we do not desire, and to
 give thanks for such things of which we
 have no Consideration or Esteem. God
 being the Great Judge and Discerner of
 Spirits, knows with what Temper and
 Inclination we come to him; and how
 can we expect he should bestow that upon
 us, which he knows we care not whe-
 ther he does or no? many times what we
 had rather be without. As for instance,
 we pray that God would *not lead us
 into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.*
 Who can ever imagine any Man to be in
 earnest in this Request, that knowingly
 and needlessly runs *himself* into Tempta-
 tion every day; and tho' made conscious
 of his own Weakness by repeated Falls,
 will still be challenging, and wrestling still
 with an Antagonist whom he has found
 too strong for him? He knows the *Siren*
 that has often charm'd him to his Ruin,
 he owns his Folly, pretends to repent of
 it, and change his Measures; but 'tis a
 vain Pretence, while (with *Solomon's*
 young Man void of Understanding) he
 daily goes the way to her House, and still
 frequents her Company. The Love of
 Wine, or the Influence and Example of
 his debauched Companions, have be-
 tray'd

tray'd him frequently to Intemperance; he confesses it, and resolves to grow sober and abstemious; yet runs into the same Society as often as he can have it, and one Glass leads him on to another, till his Appetite has again overpower'd his Reason and his Vertue. Does such a Man indeed desire that God would keep him from Sin, when he so apparently delights in the Temptation? Or that God would preserve him from Temptation, when he himself wantonly plays with it, nay even seeks it out, and tempts the Tempter? If therefore the Grace of God does not (according to the Letter of his Prayer) preserve him from Temptation, and deliver him from Evil, it is not that *God refuses to hear him, or denies his Request*; but because his Affection not going along with the Words, he does not *really desire* this, and consequently it is not his *Request*, he does not *pray* for it; and tho' he may say the Lord's Prayer twenty times in a Day, he may *thank himself*, if nevertheless he falls into grievous Sins, and is overcome by many Temptations: For his *Heart*, as well as his *Voice*, must join, or God will not regard him. Did we but impartially examine into the State of our Affections, and compare our Prayers and our Conduct together, 'tis to be fear'd

fear'd much of the like Sincerity would appear in other Instances, which I have not time to mention. But surely at the very moment we are putting up Petitions to God, one transient Thought upon each of them before we utter them, will tell us whether we are in earnest or no. 'Tis easy to think with my self, whether I do indeed desire this thing which I am about to ask: If I find I do not, 'tis in vain to ask it; and if I do, my Affections may be said to go along with my Petition. This Method I would seriously recommend, that our Prayers may be a deliberate Act of the *Heart* and of the *Judgment*, as well as of the *Tongue*. And by what I have insisted on, it will appear, that by the Affections I do not mean that forced Fervency, which is rather a straining and working up of the Passions; nor that meer Warmth of Imagination and Fancy, on which some People lay the stress of all Devotion, but a *regular, solid, rational, and sincere Desire* of what we pray for, which may take place in the Mind without extravagant Raptures and affected Tones and Postures. Thus much for that Sincerity or Earnestness, which is one Branch of Importunity in Prayer.

The

The *Second* thing imply'd in Importunity in Prayer, is *Continuance* or *Perseverance*. To this St. Paul excites the *Thessalonians*; *Pray without ceasing, in every thing give Thanks; for this is the Will of God concerning you.* And the *Philippians* also; *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving let your Requests be made known unto God.* And the same Apostle describing to the *Ephesians* the Christian Armour, with which he would have them always guarded and in readiness, adds in the Close as a material Part of it, *Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance.* And our Saviour here implies the same thing, by the Repetition of his Command, so often in a Variety of Words, *Ask, seek, knock*; that is, pray frequently, or continue praying, with an unwearied Diligence. Now let us see what is included in the Perseverance, to which these and many other Places of Scripture press us.

(1.) It imports an *Habitual Disposition* to pray, and this implies an inwrought Habit of fearing, loving, and honouring God: for as the Nature of Prayer is described, in general, to be an Intercourse or Conversation of the Soul with God,
that

that Intercourse can never be carry'd on without honourable and worthy Thoughts of God; and he that has that Sense of God *truly*, will have it *habitually*; and he that has it *habitually*, will exert it *frequently*. Such a Soul will ascend to God upon all Occasions, and by often Returns and Emotions; and this Sense of the Duty reconciles those Expressions in Holy Scripture, of *praying always*, and *continuing instant in Prayer*, not only to a Possibility, but to easiness and Familiarity: For the Soul of a Man is quick and agil, it can enter the Courts of Heaven abstractedly, and offer a thousand Petitions, while the Body is but dressing and preparing for the Temple; and there is no honest Affair in the World, how laborious and troublesome soever, that can hinder this spiritual Commerce.

(2.) Perseverance in Prayer implies likewise a Fervency of more set and solemn Applications to God at all proper Opportunities, and on all Occasions; we either want or receive something at his Hands continually, our Souls and Bodies, our Estates and Employments, our Families and Relations, the State of the Church, or that of the Public, afford us Matter enough every day we live to apply ourselves to God by Supplications, or by Praises.

Praises. Morning and Evening is the least we can think our selves obliged to. It is a good thing, says Holy David, to Psa. 92. give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing Prai-^{1, 2.} ses unto thy Name, O thou most High; to shew forth thy Loving Kindness in the Morning, and thy Faithfulness every Night. Even the Times of our Eating, the Returns of our stated Meals, require us to pray for a Blessing on the Food he gives us, and to praise him for it, according to the Example of our Blessed Lord himself, Mat. 14. who always did so, when he sat down^{9.} to eat. And besides these fix'd and con-^{Mat. 15. 36.} stant Occasions, the Accidents we see, Luke 24. and the Accidents we hear of, our Sick-^{30.} ness, our Health, our Encrease, or our Losses, our spiritual State, our Conversation, and our Business, and our Recreation; these all call upon us to call upon God very frequently, either to deprecate his Displeasure, or to beg his Assistance; to implore his Grace, or to own his Providence, and to praise his Goodness, and he that does this may be said to pray continually. Thus far a Man may proceed privately; but because Prayer is likewise a public Act of Religion, and that God requires that we should honour him before Men, and in the Face of the World, therefore are we obliged,

(3.) To

(3.) To neglect as few Opportunities as is possible, of *assembling our selves publicly* to worship God with united Souls, and combined and conjugated Affections, assisting and enflaming one another. The Church has appointed a *daily* Service for the Worship of God in public, which has been practised from the very first Beginning of the Christian Religion, by the Apostles themselves, and the Primitive Christians. The *Jews* had stated Hours of daily Prayers, and the Apostles and first Believers resorted to the Temple at those Hours; so it is said of St. *Peter* and St. *John*, that they went up into the Temple at the Hour of Prayer, being the ninth Hour. And there is nothing more manifest in the Writings of the antient Christians, than that they observed stated Times of public Worship daily and nightly too: for during the Ages of Persecution they were forced to assemble in the Night; and in the following Ages, when Persecution ceased, and so the Occasion of those nightly Assemblies ceased likewise; yet in some Places, especially when a Monastical Life came to be esteem'd, they continued still these nocturnal Offices. But the Church of *England* at the Reformation observed a most excellent Decorum in this matter, requiring only the

Morn.

Morning and Evening Service in her Liturgy, and these neither at any definite Hours, leaving that to the Wisdom of Governours, and the Convenience of Places, and the attending of this Service (as well as the private Exercise of Devotion) where the necessary Business of human Life will admit, may very well be look'd upon, as included in that acceptable Frequency which Importunity and Perseverance do imply.

(4.) Perseverance in Prayer implies *unweary'd and undiscouraged continuance in begging some particular Mercy, tho' God seems not to regard us, nor does, in any Thing at present, look as if he would ever answer us in that Matter. That such an Importunity is an Act of Faith which God is well pleased with, and how long soever he may keep us in the Exercise of it, by seeming to take no notice of our Request, will certainly at length give a gracious Answer to, is several Times inculcated by our Saviour; as in that Parable of the unjust Judge, and the importunate Widow, the Moral of which is expressly declared to be, that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; and in that other of the Householder raised at Midnight by the Importunity of his Friend, tho' other Considerations*

Luke 18.

1, 2.

Luke 11.
9.

would not prevail to supply him with what he wanted. And that this is that very Perseverance more immediately encouraged by our Saviour here, appears, in that he makes the Application of the last mentioned Parable, in the same Words with his Exhortation here, *Ask,*

and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. The like Encouragement he gives also in his Conduct to the Woman of Canaan, who follow'd him with repeated Solicitations to heal her Daughter, and tho' sharply answered and repuls'd, would take no denial; whereupon, as if he were overcome at length by her resolute Perseverance, he answered her, *O*

Mat. 15.
28.

Woman, great is thy Faith: Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. Such Perseverance therefore is an act of Faith, most highly acceptable to God; when tho' all Circumstances look dark about us, and we have long and earnestly prayed, yet seem to have hitherto prayed in vain, and have no Prospect of being answered still, and every Thing carries an appearance, that we shall never gain our Point, we nevertheless hold on Praying, continue our earnest Requests, and wait submissively the Will of God concerning us. Hoping even against Hope, and with pious *Job,*

blow

U

resol-

resolving, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* We are not to suppose, that God's requiring or expecting this *Importunity*, is a meer Point of Majesty. Tho' if it were, 'tis surely reasonable, and the most exalted Creature in the Universe could not think much to wait upon the Sovereign and infinite Majesty of God with its Requests, how long soever it might be before he would vouchsafe an Answer: Nor are we to imagine, that by repeated Solicitations we may tire him out, and so change his Mind, and oblige him to grant us what he had no Intention at first to yield to: For that were a weakness, of which the unchangeable Wisdom of God is incapable. But he requires and expects it, because he would *exercise our Faith in him*, and try us, whether we can firmly adhere to, and depend upon him under such discouraging Delays and seeming Disregard of us; and this too, *for our own sakes*; that our Vertue being the brighter by such an Exercise, may be the more gloriously rewarded, and the Blessing we have so long desired, may be the more acceptable to us, and more thankfully received by us, when it comes. For we pray, and persevere in praying; the Mercy we pray for (provided it be really a Mercy, and will do us good)

Job 13.

15.

1 Pet. 1.

7.

will surely come at last: If we *thus ask*, it shall *be given* us; thus *seek*, we shall *find*; thus *knock*, it shall *be opened* to us. But then we must consider the Matter of our Petitions, *what it is we ask for*; if it be Riches, or long Life, or Grandure and Honour in this World, to be *importunate* in begging these, is to be *impudent*; God has no where *promised* them; nay, he has *forbid* us to *set our Hearts upon them*; and therefore such an Importunity about them, is not only vain and trifling, but *displeasing* to him. For a sickly Man to be importunate in begging Health; a Man under the pressures of Poverty, such Supplies as are necessary for him, or a change of his Condition for the better; a Man in Danger, or in any Affliction begging for Deliverance; or engaged in any lawful Undertaking of Moment, imploring Success, and a Blessing on his Endeavours: In these, and the like Cases, I say, 'tis *lawful* to be importunate, because God has encouraged us to ask; but then the Concern being only Temporal, and the Glory of God, and our own real Good being, for ought we know more to be served by denying, than by answering our Request, the Importunity here must be always accompany'd with an humble and entire
Submission

Submission to God's Will and Wisdom. This our Saviour's Example teaches us; who tho' he prayed thrice, and very earnestly in the Garden, that he might not suffer, still corrected his Desires with, *nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done.* But when we pray for spiritual Blessings, for pardon of Sin, and for the Grace of God, Importunity has its full Scope; it is not only lawful, but a *Vertue* here; and we may sollicite absolutely *for them*, and must never cease, till we obtain them. Thus I have gone through the first Part of the Paragraph, I come now to the Second.

II. The great Rule of *Doing as we would be done by*, than which nothing is a more equitable, or a more easy Guide for our Behaviour in the Offices of Society, or Civil Life, towards all with whom we have to do. The Equity of it is so visible, that it needs no Proof; the universal Reason of Mankind agrees to it in the Theory, tho' their Appetites and Passions hurry them beside the Practice. Nay, so fond of it was that brave and virtuous Roman Emperor *Alex. Severus*, tho' an *Heathen*, that giving it the Negative Turn, he caused it to be wrote in Letters of Gold over the Gates of his Palace,

lace, and in other public Places; *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*; What you would not have others do to YOU, do not you to OTHERS. And the easiness of this Rule, is as great as the Equity of it: For 'tis a Guide which every Man carries in his own Breast, whereby he can readily determine, without recurring to large Volumes of Laws, or Systems of Morality, or Courts of Judicature, what is just and fit for him to do with Respect to another; he needs but turn the Tables, and suppose his *Neighbours Case* to be his own, and *His* his Neighbours, and then he has his Direction at Hand; what usage he should give, by considering what usage he would expect. We are commanded to love our Neighbour as our selves; but our Partiality in this, and the Difference we are apt to make, in the way of Love and Esteem, betwixt our selves and others, is the Cause of all Injustice. Now this Selfishness, is what the Precept here of *doing as we would be done by*, is designed to correct. And the Rule is so true and exact in it self, that were it not for the Corruption of human Nature, which triumphs in nothing more than in perverting and debauching that which should reform it, one might pronounce it to hold

hold good in all Cases without Bounds or Limitations; but because the very best Things are liable to abuse, and the wisest Maxims may be stretch'd beyond the Design and Reason of them, it will be necessary so to restrain our present Rule, that it may not lead us beyond what is *lawful* or *reasonable* to be done.

(1.) We must confine it to Things that are *Lawful*, or not prohibited by the Word of God: For else the Scriptures would be contradictory, if by this Rule of *Doing as we would be done by*, we were obliged or allow'd to do to others, what by other plain and evident Texts we are forbid to do, or to desire. My Friend desires me to tell a Lye for him to excuse him, or to spread a false Story about for his Advantage; or tho' he don't desire it; yet I think it would serve his Interest, and what then? Tho' I myself should be so wicked, or so weak, as to desire the like of another, or be glad of its being done on my Account, yet will this Rule by no means justify my doing so for any Body else, because it is sinful either for me either to tell a Lye myself, or to desire another should; in like manner, it will be no excuse to a cheating Gamester, that he will give the Person he games with leave to cheat him

if he can; nor to him that endeavours to make his Companion *drunk*, that he is very willing to be made as drunk himself; because Cheating and Drunkenness are Sins, and no pretences whatsoever can qualifie the Guilt. This Maxim therefore, of doing as we would be done by, was never design'd to make Men lawless, or such an absolute Law to themselves, that whatsoever they can reciprocally desire or submit to, should be lawful. It ought to be *first* known that the Thing is lawful, before the Rule can be applied; which, strictly speaking, is not so much a Law it self, as a Measure of performing other Duties to our Neighbour.

(2.) We must confine it to Things that are *reasonable*, or fit to be done. Some Things are lawful, which are not expedient: It is lawful for me to give away a good Part of my Estate, or any particular valuable Possession that I have, to whomsoever I think fit; but if a Neighbour of mine should come to me, and with a serious Face should *desire* me to settle such a Lordship upon him, &c. I dare say all the World would agree, it was a very imprudent and unreasonable Request; and tho' he should press me an hundred Times over with the Rule

of

of *doing as I would be done by* (for it is not to be deny'd that I should gladly receive such a Favour and Benefaction my self from any other Person) he would be as often told, it was a Thing *undecent to be ask'd, impertinent to be expected, and unfit to be done*. To instance in another Thing not reduceable to this Rule, no Judge or Magistrate is obliged thereby to pardon a notorious Offender against the Laws, upon thinking with himself, that truly was he in the Malefactor's place, he would be very desirous to be pardoned. The Rule breaks here, because tho' 'tis natural to an Offender to deprecate the Punishment due to his Offence, *it is not fit or reasonable* the Magistrate should hearken to him; for he acts in a public Capacity, and must consider the Reverence due to the Laws, the Peace and good Order of the Public, more than the Benefit of any private Person. Again, a Person who is in very indifferent Circumstances, desires me to be bound with him for a considerable Sum, which he is not likely to pay, and if I pay it my self, it will be a great Detriment and Wrong to my Family; I am not by this Rule obliged to answer his Desire, tho' I should be glad, if the Case were my own, as it is his, that
another

another would do the same for me; because it is reasonable I should consider my own Family and Circumstances in the first Place; I am to love my Neighbour as my self, but I am not obliged to love him *better*, and to do my self a great Injury for the doing him a Benefit. Many other Instances might be given, but there is no Need to enlarge. Religion and Prudence must govern us in this as well as in every other Duty. I will therefore take a short and general View of what is indeed the proper Application of this Rule. Let a Child, a Subject, or a Servant, but ask himself without Partiality, what Honour, what Submission, what Obedience he would think was due to him, were he himself a Father, Magistrate, or Master, and his Answer to this would be a Rule for his own Behaviour towards those that are so related to him. The same will hold in all other relative Duties; and hereby may be discerned the Equity of reverencing Superiors, of being civil and courteous to Equals, gentle to Inferiors, and just and charitable to all Mankind. It would keep us from an insolent and surly Carriage towards any one, from despising and ridiculing, from upbraiding and provoking, if we do but seriously consider how ill we our selves could bear

bear this from another. It would teach us to forbear and forgive, because we desire in our Turns to be forborn and forgiven. It would make us candid and good natured, in putting the best Interpretation upon the Words and Actions of others, if we reflect but how reasonable we think it, that another should deal so candidly with us. The Poor may be convinced by it, of the Unreasonableness of maligning and envying the Rich the Advantage of their Riches. And these would also see the Unreasonableness of refusing Relief and Assistance to the Poor, because each of them would in the others Circumstances expect a contrary Behaviour. Let but the Rich and the Poor change Places, and then they who before cry'd out of the Pride and Arrogance of great Men, will think it hard to be called proud, only for keeping up the necessary Port and Grandure of their Stations: And they who before condemn'd the Laziness of the Poor, and thought themselves to have a Right of doing wholly what they pleas'd with their own, will then think it hard, when necessitous, not to be pitied, supported, and relieved, by those who are able. A reasonable Kindness requir'd by any *one*, will be readily done, when we consider that we our selves
stand

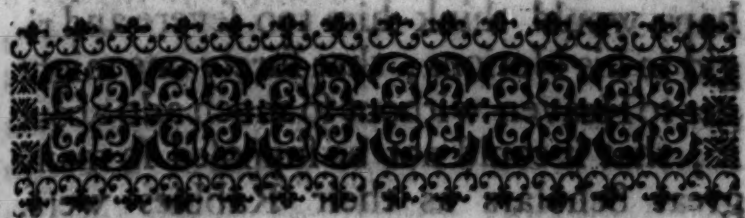
stand in Need of the Kindness of others, and would think it very ill-natured to have a neighbourly Office refused us. Those that are now so fond of running up and down from Company to Company, with scandalous Stories and venomous Reflections upon a Neighbour, would find a better Employment, if they would consider how they would resent it, to be so used and traduced themselves. Let us be exactly just in all our Dealings with others, as we would assuredly have others just in all their Dealings with us. These are the chief general Instances wherein this Rule of *Doing as we would be done by* must take Place. Particulars are reducible thereto by every Man's private Conscience, as Circumstances arise, to bring them under Consideration. I will now only in a few Words consider, what is meant by our Saviour, in saying that this Rule is the *Law and the Prophets*, and then conclude. His Meaning I conceive to be no more than this, "That
 " it is the Sum or Substance of all that
 " the Prophets have laid down with Re-
 " spect to the Commandments of the
 " second Table, *our Duty towards our*
 " *Neighbour*. 'Tis no new Precept in
 " the Sense of it, whatever it may be
 " in Terms: For the Law and the Pro-
 " phets,

“ phets, in all particular Directions
“ they have given for our Conduct one
“ to another, have said thus much already
“ *in Effect*, and in Effect *no more than*
“ *this*, that we should use others as we
“ *would be used our selves*. But to carry
the Meaning of it higher, so as to suppose
it to comprehend the *whole* Duty of a
Christian, is an impious Pretence to de-
stroy the Commandments of the first
Table. And the Pretence is as unrea-
sonable as it is impious: For the Rea-
son whereupon this Rule is grounded,
cannot possibly extend it farther than
our Duty to *Mankind*, who tho’ they
differ in some Circumstances, yet being
made of the same Materials, coming
all from the same Stock, and going
all to the same Place, the Grave, they
may be said in Nature to be *equal*; and
this Equality is the Foundation of the
Right of reciprocal Love, and of the
which is consequent thereupon, of *Doing*
as we would be done by. It is enough that
we love our Neighbour *as our selves*;
because he is of the same Kind with us,
and to love him more would be as unjust
as to love him less than our selves. But
God being infinite in all Perfection, we
ought to love him infinitely *better* than
our selves; there ought to be no Measure
of

of our Love to *Him*, but to love Him with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength; there can be no turning of the Tables, and therefore no Place for this Rule betwixt him and us. Since then this Rule will carry us no farther than our Duty to Men, 'tis certainly but one half, and not the whole of what a Christian has to do; for without Dispute he owes a Duty to God as well as to Man: And to the one as well as to the other, is this same Expression, the Law and the Prophets, elsewhere apply'd by our Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; this is the first and great Commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

may be said in Nature of the Right of reciprocal Love, and of the which is consequent thereupon, of Doing as we would be done by. It is enough that we love our Neighbour as our selves; because he is of the same Kind with us, and to love him more would be as unjust as to love him less than our selves. But God being infinite in all Perfection, we love him infinitely better than our selves; there ought to be no Measure of

once would be flattered at it: some per-



CHAP. XIV.

Of the Difficulties of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.

MATT. VII. 13, 14.

Enter ye in at the strait Gate: for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Destruction; and many there be that go in thereat.

Because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.



OUR Saviour having explain'd the Precepts of the Moral Law to a degree of Strictness and Perfection, far beyond what had been ever taught by the Jewish Doctors, it was natural to suppose his Audience

ence would be startled at it; some perhaps would think him too severe and rigid in his Notions; that surely one might get to Heaven without so much ado about it; that it could not be supposed so many great Scholars as their Rabbies were, should be mistaken, and none of them understand the Depth and Meaning of the Law as well as He; and that so many devout and holy Men, their *Affideans*, *Pharisees*, and *Essenes*, should be unacceptable to God, and in the wrong way to Happiness. Others probably, who were convinced of the Justness of his Doctrine, might be frightened with the Prospect of so many difficult Duties, despair of ever living up to so nice a Scheme, and reflecting how singular and unfashionable their Endeavours towards it must make them look, would rather chuse to go on in that easier way wherein others went, and run the venture with the rest. To both these sorts of Men our Saviour seems to apply himself in this Paragraph, which, if I may be allowed to give you the Sense of it in other Words, is as follows.

“Are ye alarmed at the Singularity of
 “my Doctrine, and the Severity of the
 “Morals I have laid before you? Be not
 “offended at either. ’Tis God that pre-
 “scribes

“ scribes your Duty, your Part is to do it.
“ Whatever others teach, whatever o-
“ thers practise, assure your selves that
“ such a Religion as will bring you safe
“ to Heaven, is a severe and awful thing,
“ and requires a greater Industry and
“ Application than your Doctors have
“ suggested to you. 'Tis hard but not
“ impracticable; it may be attain'd to,
“ but it must be with Labour: A strait
“ and difficult Path, and few will go a-
“ long with you in it; but it leads to
“ Happiness, and 'tis infinitely worth
“ your while, whatever Pains ye take in
“ it. It's true, the Wise, the Learned,
“ the Great, the Many of this World,
“ that love to take up with an easy
“ Scheme, which may indulge their Sen-
“ ses and their Passions, will beckon you
“ another way, and count you singular
“ and morose, if you comply not with
“ them: But Truth is not to be deter-
“ mined by the Number of those that
“ hold an Opinion, nor the Way to Hea-
“ ven distinguished by a Multitude of
“ Examples. Beware therefore that an
“ implicit Confidence in these mislead
“ you not: for the Road they take is
“ broad indeed and smooth, and much
“ frequented, but it leads to everlasting
“ Misery.

306 *Of the Difficulties of* CHAP. XIV.

The Gate and Way that leads to Life, being represented here as so strait and narrow, that few will care to pass thro' it, or to travail in it; in what Sense must we understand that Declaration of our Saviour, that *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden light*? as also that of St. John, that *his Commandments are not grievous*? Here is no Contradiction, because an Affair that has many Difficulties and much Perplexity in it, may yet be easy, in comparison with another still more laborious; that which is really toilsom in it self, may yet upon some Considerations be not only well supported, but delightful; as that which is really easy and agreeable in its own Nature, may by Circumstances be render'd grievous. To apply this to the present Question; Christianity is a Scheme of rational and noble Precepts, easy in themselves to be performed; but through the Corruption of our Nature, the Force of that original Sin which has bent all our Faculties to what is evil, and the Power of Custom, which has strengthen'd it by inveterate Habits of Sin, Religion (being design'd to rectify these Distortions) must needs become a painful and severe Task to us. Yet difficult as it is, in such unhappy Circumstances a fervent Love of God will make it easy and delightful,

Mat. II.
30.

1 John 5.
3.

lightful, which is what the Apostle means when he says, that those *Commandments are not grievous*. 'Tis easy, when we consider the Strength of Divine Grace assisting our Weakness; 'tis easy, when we are well accustomed to it, however difficult in the first Attempts; or at least, whatever Difficulties we have to struggle with in our whole Christian Course, the exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, which is the Prize we labour for, will smooth the Ruggedness of the Way, and make us easy in the Expectation of that blessed Hope; and take the matter how we will, the System of Christianity is, upon the Comparison, a far more easy Yoke, and a much lighter Burden, than the dark, and tedious, and numberless Ceremonies of the *Jewish Law*, or of the Heathen Superstition.

But in what respects the Christian Way to Heaven, is a difficult and uneasy Path, will more fully appear, if we consider,

I. What the Way to Happiness is.

II. The many Impediments that are apt to divert Men out of it, or hinder their making any great Progress in it.

I. First, we must enquire *what the Way to Happiness* is, which may be resolved most suitably to our present Purpose in these Particulars.

(1.) It is a Way of Obedience. (2.) An Obedience that must be universal. (3.) That must be constant. And (4.) That must be cordial, or from the Heart.

(1.) The Way to Heaven lies in *Obedience*, viz. to the Laws and Precepts of the Gospel; and this is the first of those Instances which makes the Passage strait and troublesome to us. When Christ invites the weary Sinner, him who is laden with the Weight and Burden of his Sins, to come to him; and when he invites him to do this in order to his Ease and Rest; yet even then he tells him, that he must lay a Yoke upon him: *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* How easy soever it is made to us by his Assistance, yet observe that it is a Yoke still; and tho' it be light, by virtue of the Strength and Help that he gives to us, yet still it is, and is *stiled* a Burden, not in respect of the intrinsic Nature of his Precepts; for he has put no Hardships upon us, commanded

manded nothing that is in it self impracticable or burdensome; but meerly in regard of the Obedience that must be paid to them. For all Obedience is grievous to Human Nature; it supposes a Law, and a Law infers a Restraint, and all Restraint is troublesome to them that understand themselves no better than the Generality of Mankind do, according to the old and common Observation, *Nitimur in vetitum; We desire to do that which is forbidden, and that because it is forbidden.*

Altho' it be very true, that the holy Precepts of our Lord, where they restrain us from doing of any thing, restrain us from our own Inconveniences; and where they determine to our Duty, determine to our Advantage, to do that which is good for us; yet such is our natural Desire of Liberty, of doing or omitting as we please, that all Restraint of this Liberty is Matter of Trouble to us.

But then, Secondly, this will yet farther appear, if we consider, that the Way to Happiness is *universal* or *general* Obedience to *all* Christ's Precepts, not only to those that offer less Contradiction to our Appetites and Desires, but even to those, and those especially, which are levelled against the strongest and most prevailing sinful Inclinations in us. And thus St.

- 1 Tim. 6. *Paul writes to Timothy, Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches. This Charge was to be given to them rather than any other, because they were most exposed here, and likeliest to yield to that Temptation. The Prophet Je-*
- Jer. 9. 23. *remy suggests the same, Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might; let not the rich Man glory in his Riches. The wise Man is not so likely to value himself upon his Power or Riches; nor the Man of Power upon his Wealth or Wisdom; nor yet the rich Man upon his Sagacity or Might: He applies the Precept therefore to such Instances, as it is most natural for a Man so qualified to place his Confidence in; against this he must especially keep upon his guard, as the Vanity or Sin that does most easily beset him. And this is one thing that much straitens the Gate to Heaven: for Men would willingly in some respects, and in some instances, deny themselves for a future Reward; but they would not do it in those Instances wherein they are most of all concerned.*
- Matt. 19. *Good Master, says the young Man in the Gospel, what shall I do that I may have eternal Life? Our Saviour answers, Keep the Commandments; and having repeated*
- seve-

several of them to him, he tells our Saviour, *All those have I kept from my Youth up, what lack I yet?* To this it is answered, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come and follow me.* And what did he answer to this Command? That follows in the next Words, *When he heard that Saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions.* See here how far a Man may go in obedience to those Precepts of Christ, where his own particular Inclinations are not peculiarly contradicted, and yet make a full Stand, when he finds any Contradiction in these. Here then lies the Straitness or Narrowness of the Gate which leads to Life, that it requires universal Obedience in all those very Cases and Instances, where we are most unwilling to it.

(3.) As this Obedience must be universal, so must it be *constant* also, and this still adds to the Difficulty. St. Paul having given the *Corinthians* a large Description of the glorious State of the Blessed in Heaven, after their Resurrection from the Dead, concludes it with these Words: *Therefore, my Beloved Brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord.* Sometimes

Mens Consciences may be struck with a sudden Conviction of the Folly and the Danger of their Ways ; sometimes they quarrel with their Lusts by reason of that Shame and Suffering, which they bring upon them ; sometimes the Temptation is removed, the evil Company is withdrawn, the Tempter hides himself, and then the Lust sleeps, and while it sleeps, it seems to be dead. But no sooner doth the Temptation return, but then the Lust awakes, the Sinner forgets his Convictions, forgets the Shame and Sufferings his Sins had formerly brought upon him, forgets the Resolutions he made when he was under that Condition ; he then violates his Intentions, breaks his Vows, and returns to the same Excess of Riot as before. But now the Obedience of the Gospel must be stedfast, unmoveable ; it must be such as will continue as well when we are, as when we are not under Temptation. And this is the third of those Particulars, which renders the Way and Gate to Heaven strait and narrow. But likewise,

(4.) They that will enter the strait Gate of everlasting Happiness, must be obedient *from the Heart*, or *sincere* in their Obedience, which renders it so much the straiter still. Were it enough to put on

a specious Garb in all our external Conversation, only to hide our Lusts, and cover the Corruption that lurks within us, the Craft and Policy of this World would teach some Men to do their Duty; they would easily learn to smoothe the Tongue, and oil the Lips, and bear the Appearance of such Persons as Christ requires his Disciples to be. But now the Precepts of the Gospel reach farther than to the outward Man, they require the Obedience of the Heart; and here indeed lies the greatest Part of our Obedience; yea, and that which is most difficult to us. 'Tis no such great matter of difficulty to forbear the outward Act that is forbidden; but for the proud and haughty Man to subdue his inward Pride, for a Man in Affliction to check all inward Murmuring, and bear it with a free Submission to the Will of God; for the sensual Man to mortify and subdue his sensual Inclinations; for him that naturally loves Wealth to abandon his secret Veneration and Esteem of it; for him that hath received an Injury, heartily to lay aside all inward Malice, or Grudges, as well as actual Revenge; this is the Gate that leads to Heaven and Happiness, and this indeed is a strait Gate. Men may flatter themselves with vain Hopes of getting to Heaven some other
other

other way; but it is certain there is no other than this, of sincere, constant, universal Obedience to all Christ's Precepts, can bring them thither; which being in its nature a very strait narrow Gate, it is to be fear'd that few Men will enter in at it, especially considering there are many Impediments in their way; which brings me to my second general Enquiry.

II. What the Impediments are, which are apt to divert Men out of it, or hinder them from making any great Progress in it. And they are principally,

(1.) *Natural Inclination.* Man was indeed at first created upright, with a Capacity for, and a prevailing Inclination to Holiness, tho' yet with a Possibility of sinning; but when *Adam* had sinned away the original Perfection of his Nature, and by one wilful Act of Disobedience corrupted all his Faculties; the Bias of his Mind was changed, his Understanding darkned, his Affections debauch'd, his Will distorted with a violent Bent to that which is evil: and this sad Corruption runs in the Blood through every Creature descended from him. It appears betimes, even in the tender Age of Infancy, and sticks close to us in all the Periods of Human Life, in Youth, in Man-

Manhood, in old Age; and tho' it may by the Grace of God be kept in subjection, it is never totally conquered, even in the best of Men, till the Body return to Dust, and the Spirit return to God who gave it. Now this is that *earthly* or *natural* Man, which favoureth not the things of Heaven, nor can at all relish them, without the Illuminations and strong Impressions of Divine Grace; and even then, Nature is still apt to return upon us, and overbear what is spiritual. How inclinable are we to all the Evils which the Gospel prohibits, and how averse to those Duties which the Gospel expressly requires? What abundance of Pains must be taken with Men, what Arguments used, what Reasons urged, what inward Checks and Convictions upon their Minds, before they can be induced to offer any Violence to this their corrupted Nature: And then when the Arguments that have been used, the Love of Happiness, the Fear of Misery in another World, the Sense of God's infinite Favour in giving his Son to die for them, have wrought some better Inclinations in them; yet how many Degrees of their former natural Desires and Appetites still remain to be subdued? and what a Conflict must a Man have with himself, what Strifes and Wars in his

his own Breast, to resist and oppose these Appetites? And yet all this must be done, we must mortify and subdue these corrupt Desires, and Passions, and Aversions, before we shall be able to walk in the narrow Way, or enter in at the strait Gate to Heaven.

(2.) A second Impediment we have to struggle with, is, the *Temptation of the Devil*, that subtil, that unwearied Solicitor to Sin, who from his Hatred of God is continually fomenting the Rebellion against him; from the Malignity of his Nature, takes delight in Wickedness; and from his Envy to Mankind, industriously watches all Opportunities of enticing us into the *broad Way of Sin and Ruin*, or (if he can't prevail for that) to make our Way to Heaven as rough and troublesome as he can, by plying us with vile Suggestions, by laying secret Snares for us, by giving us frequent Falls, disquieting our Minds, and interrupting our religious Course by many Arts of Molestation. Indeed he is invisible to us, we are not aware of his Approaches, but that renders his Temptation the more dangerous, he surprises us when we are least provided, he applies himself to that Lust which is most potent in us, and at that time when it is most enflamed, and in
such

CH
such
with
ate
adv
chie
and
that
ter
lant,
as a
whon
in th
is th
mour
again
wres
gain
gain
Worl
Place
we h
from
entri
(3-
Snare
The
of thi
Way
nion
venie
to w
woll

such manner as is most likely to work with us. He is a Spirit, and can insinuate himself into our Minds with great advantage; his long Experience in Mischief has rendered him politic and crafty, and his Malice makes him diligent, So that with great Reason it is, that St. Peter has cautioned us, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the Faith.* And to the same purpose is that of St. Paul, *Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil.* For we wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places. We see then what an Enemy we have, who will, if possible, divert us from walking in the narrow Way, and entering in at the strait Gate.

(3.) A third Impediment is, *the many Snares that this World lays before us.* The Good and Evil, the Hopes and Fears of this present Life, divert us out of the Way to Heaven. The overbearing Opinion we have of what is necessary, convenient and beneficial to us here, is apt to work upon us so far, as to make us eagerly

eagerly to pursue the Advantages of this present World, with the Neglect of that Blessedness which is proposed to us in the Life to come. We are apt to consider things imperfectly, so as to give the Preference to Concernments of less value, but present; before those of greater Worth, which are future. The Love of this present World, the Profits, Honours, and Pleasures of it, draw Men aside from spiritual things, and chain them down to vile Affections, alienate them from the Laws of God, and introduce them into a thousand Frauds and Injuries to one another, and the Fear of Want or Poverty, Disgrace or Danger in this Life, betray Men to base Actions, unworthy Arts, and sinful Compliances, to avoid them.

2 Tim. 4. Demas hath forsaken me, saith St. Paul, having loved this present World, loved the Advantages, and fear'd the Dangers of this present Life; having considered things present, and not considered things to come, he hath abandoned me, and it may be the Truth it self, to avoid the Dangers which attend me. Now seeing the things of this present Life have so strong an Influence upon us, seeing we must resist this Influence, if we will walk in the strait Way, and mortify all Desires of worldly things, take up our Cross, and follow

*2 Tim. 4.
10.*

follow Christ, if we will be his Disciples; it is evident what a mighty Difficulty or Obstruction this must be to us in our Way to Heaven.

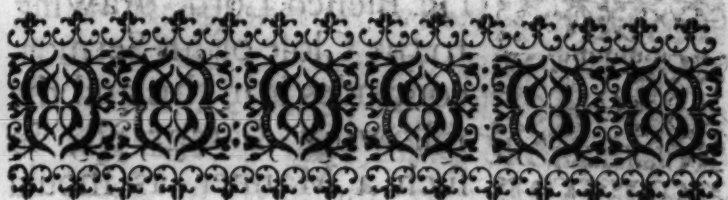
(4.) Add hereunto, in the fourth place, the ill *Examples we have from other Men to lead us out of the right Way.* And this our Saviour here particularly cautions us against. Pride and Covetousness, Lust and Intemperance, Ambition, Malice, and the like, abound in all Corners of the World. The serving and indulging of these is the Principle by which the Generality of Men direct and form their own Lives, whatever the Word of God commands to the contrary. And when the greatest part live at such a rate as this, their Example will have a mighty force upon others, to move them to live after ^{1 Cor. 15.} the same manner. *Be not deceived,* says ^{33.} St. Paul, *evil Communications corrupt good Manners.* And St. Peter gives this Warn- ^{2 Pet. 3.} ing to the Christians, to whom he wrote, ^{14.} *Beware lest ye also, being led away by the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness.* Imitation is natural unto Men, so that we are enclin'd to do like others, and are insensibly led into it: And while in some Vices, Fashion has almost made them reputable, or at least gives Countenance and Encouragement to them;

320 *Of the Difficulties of* CHAP. XIV.

them; in others, Men are apt to think they cannot be safe, without doing the same things, and using the same Arts, which they see others do and use. Custom either renders Truth and Vertue singular and ridiculous, or makes them seem dangerous and unsafe. So that Men chuse rather to follow a Multitude to do Evil, than straiten their own Measures by the slighted and unfashionable Maxims of Religion; and they find it very hard to bring themselves to make a better Choice; so fatal a Temptation is ill Example. And upon all these Accounts above specified, well might our Blessed Saviour affirm, that *wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat*; while at the same time, *strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.*



CHAP.



CHAP. XV.

Of False Teachers.

MATT. VII. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

Beware of False Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps Clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.

Ye shall know them by their Fruits: Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles?

Even so every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit: But a corrupt Tree bringeth forth evil Fruit.

A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit: Neither can a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit.

Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down and cast into the Fire.

Wherefore by their Fruits ye shall know them.

OUR Blessed Lord, drawing to the Close of his Sermon, concludes it in this and the following Paragraph, in such a Manner as should most effectually enforce the Observation of the whole. And first, as a Guard or Fence to that most necessary practical Scheme of Religion, now advanced by him, he warns his Disciples against *False Teachers*, who for Ends and Interest of their own, would directly or indirectly debauch the Morals, as well as corrupt the Doctrine of the Church. His Caution given us hereupon seems to be to this Effect.

“ The Duties and Vertues I have here
 “ taught you, are of the last Importance
 “ to the pleasing of God, and to the sa-
 “ ving of your own Souls; and because
 “ they are so, the Enemy of your Salva-
 “ tion will labour by all possible Means
 “ to divert you from attending to them.
 “ For this Purpose he will raise up false
 “ Teachers among you, who with plausi-
 “ ble Shews of Zeal and Sincerity shall
 “ be for tracing you out new Ways to
 “ Heaven. Beware of them therefore,
 “ and assure your selves, that whatever
 “ Commission they pretend from me,
 “ if they teach any Thing contrary to
 “ what

“ what I have taught, or lay the Stress
“ of Religion any where, but where I
“ have laid it, they are doing the Devil’s
“ Work, not mine; and whatever Appea-
“ rances they may make of Sanctity, or
“ Zeal, or Wisdom, they are building
“ the Interests of their own Vanity or
“ Avarice upon your Credulity, Weak-
“ ness and Corruption: Examine the
“ Fruits of their Doctrine, and ye will
“ soon discover them. If it tend not to
“ Charity, Peace and Purity, to an in-
“ ward as well as outward Holiness, in
“ all the Branches of it, according to
“ my Gospel, ye may as well expect to
“ gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of
“ Thistles, as expect Salvation by such a
“ Doctrine. If what they teach you
“ were good, ’twould lead you to a good
“ Life, but if it amuse you with other
“ Things which serve not to this Pur-
“ pose, or lead you contrary thereto, this
“ Wisdom is not from above, but is
“ earthly, sensual, devilish. The Na-
“ ture of a Tree is known by its Fruit.
“ And as every Tree that brings not forth
“ good Fruit, how fair soever it appears
“ in Leaves or Blossoms, is good for no-
“ thing but the Fire: So shall that Pro-
“ phet, notwithstanding his seeming
“ Zeal and fair Pretences, have his Lot
“ amongst the Wicked in eternal Fire,

“ who does not both by his Life and
 “ Doctrine, labour to recommend Religi-
 “ on in that sincere and genuine Practice
 “ of it, as it is here laid down by me.”

In explaining this Paragraph farther, I
 will shew,

I. What Kind of false Prophets they
 are, of whom our Saviour here par-
 ticularly forewarns us.

II. The Marks or Tokens whereby
 they may be known. I shall begin
 with the first.

I. *What Kind of false Prophets they are,*
 of whom our Saviour here particularly
 forewarns his Disciples. 'Tis plain by
 his Description of them, *as coming in*
Sheeps Clothing, that they are no pro-
 fess'd and open Enemies to Christianity;
 but such as under the Disguise of owning
 it, yea, and the Pretence of teaching it
 too, would corrupt the Simplicity of it.
 From the first Ages of the Gospel, there
 have been many erroneous and heretical
 Doctrines scatter'd abroad, and some of
 them in the most essential and fundamen-
 tal Points, as concerning the Divinity or
 the Humanity of Christ, the Union of
 the two Natures, and the like, about
 which some ignorant and some Philosophi-
 cal Men vented most absurd and false Opi-
 nions.

nions. So did the *Simonians*, the *Cerinthians*, the *Ebionites*, the *Nicolaitans*, and other Hereticks, even while the Apostles lived, as appears by the frequent Admonitions and Warnings left upon Record, in their Epistles, against such Doctrines. Thus early the Enemy sow'd his Tares, and the Virgin Church under the Tuition of those inspired Guardians, the Apostles themselves, could no more be secured from Heresies *within*, than Persecutions from *without*: And if the Canker spread farther, and eat deeper in the following Ages, it is not at all to be wonder'd. To such false Prophets as these, this Caution of our Saviour may be extended. But considering that his whole Discourse foregoing was upon Precepts *purely practical*, the Morals of a virtuous Christian Life, as necessary to Salvation; if we will suppose any Connexion of this Paragraph with all that went before, we must conclude he more particularly points at such false Teachers as should corrupt Mens Morals, or (whether directly or indirectly) draw their Minds from the Simplicity and Practice of those Duties he had taught them. And amongst these may be reckoned,

(1.) Those who indulging the corrupt Nature of Man, interpret away the Strictness of our Saviour's Precepts. Who by

any Misconduct in their preaching, loosen the Bonds of Christian Morality, and countenance a greater Latitude in Manners than the Instructions of their Lord will justify. 'Tis not to be supposed that any of them will openly and plainly set themselves against Religion, or commend or patronize any Vice, but there are Abundance of Ways of doing the same Thing in Effect. As when they palliate any sinful and immoral Habits under the Stile of Frailty and Infirmities, which are not really so. When by a lax Interpretation, they enervate the Force of such Prohibitions or Commands in Scripture, as are really in the genuine Sense and Design of them, very strict and extensive; when they industriously avoid preaching against such particular Sins, as they know some Persons of their Audience whom they have an Interest to please, or fear to disoblige, are guilty of; or upon the like Principle avoid insisting upon a severe and disagreeable Duty: Whereas the Prophet

Isa. 58. 1. *Isaiah was commanded (and 'tis the part of every Christian Teacher) to cry aloud, not to spare, to lift up his Voice like a Trumpet, and shew the People their Transgressions and their Sins; which surely may and ought to be done, without any rude and personal Reflections; the Sin and not the Sinner must be struck at; Religion be*

promo-

promoted, but without Malice or Faction. Another Way whereby 'tis possible to encourage Sin, instead of preaching against it, is, exalting the Mercy of God in such an absolute Manner, as to leave Men under a vain Dependance upon it, or not plainly and expressly to contradict those Hopes, while they continue under the wilful Practice and Indulgence of their Sins. Such were those false Prophets whom God complains of, by the Mouth of *Jeremiah*, *They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace.* Jer. 6. 14.

I shall only instance in one other Method, which is a great Injustice to the severe Morality of the Gospel, and I'm afraid has often proved of very ill Consequence in buoying Men up in a fatal Security under a vicious Course of Life, and that is the flattering Eulogies and Characters given in *Funeral Sermons*, to Persons who with the Credit perhaps of one or two Vertues, have lived under the Guilt of many notorious Vices: Or the crying up *others* for Saints and perfect Patterns of Goodness, who lived but the common Life of Men, or but a little better; sober, and perhaps honest; constant at Church, and fair in their Dealings, but of whom nothing else appears, so exemplary either in positive Vertues, or in

their Exercise of Piety, as may justifie such a Canonization. Now what must the Audience naturally imagine hereupon, they knew the Person deceased, he was one of their Neighbour-hood; they knew him to have given himself many Liberties, whilest he lived in what they called Good-fellowship, or in prophane Swearing, or in Lewdness, or at best, we'll suppose they knew no harm by him. What must they conclude, when they hear the Minister so extravagant in his Praise, but that, according to the Doctrine of their spiritual Guide, if a Man signalize himself but in some one Vertue, he is in a safe way enough to Heaven, tho' he indulge himself in a course of many grievous Sins; a *Lord have Mercy*, when he is departing, shall be call'd Repentance; and a confident ill-grounded Presumption shall pass for Faith in Christ; and then all is well with him, as if he had liyed the most strict and sanctified Life that could be. Or on Supposition of the latter Case, the harmless honest Man, who in all outward Appearance was neither very Good, nor very Bad; must not the Audience conclude, when they hear him cry'd up for a Saint, that such a Life as his, is even more than enough to bring them to Heaven; that to be so good, is a sort of Supererogation,

on, and that they are abundantly secured of being happy hereafter, tho' they should fall a little short of him, when yet comparing all that appear'd in him with the strict Rules of the Gospel, we are far from being sure, that he himself is Happy; and therefore should not be told with so much Confidence that he is. But whatever secret Vertues he had which do not appear to us, they may avail (and we may charitably suppose there were such) as to his own Salvation; yet what we did not see we cannot imitate, and therefore his outward Conversation only will be no safe Guide for ours.

(2.) Another sort of false Teachers, whom doubtless our Saviour had in view when he gave this Caution, are those *who with greater appearances of Sanctity and Devotion, will be refining upon his Scheme by superstitious Additions of their own.* Men cannot be too Holy, or too Devout; but they may be seduced to place Devotion and Holiness in that which really is not so. Sincerity and Fervency, together with an humble, decent, unaffected Seriousness in Posture, *make Devotion in Prayer.* A reverent Attendance upon God's Word and Sacraments, a strict conscientious Obedience paid to all his Laws, an uniform Love and Practice of every Vertue, and every

every Duty towards God, our Neighbour, and our selves, according as they are traced out to us in the Holy Scriptures, *is Religion*. But what have some Men substituted in the room of these, who teach Men to place Devotion in the *number or length* of Prayers, instead of Fervency; and to place Religion in a round of pompous Formalities, and a thousand superstitious Observances, which God has never commanded. This may be Fancy and Folly, but it cannot be Religion; 'tis going out of the plain road to Heaven, which Christ has shewn us, into the By-paths of human Invention, which a jealous God will never countenance, and those that teach Men to do thus, are certainly false Teachers and Seducers. There is indeed a Principle within us, which will not suffer Men to be without a Concern for pleasing God in some way or other: They must have a Religion, whatever it is. And therefore consulting their own Lusts and Appetites as much as they can, they are most easily perswaded to take up with a *mechanical Religion*, consisting chiefly in an *outward Road of Performances*, how laborious and expensive soever they may be, than in such a *genuine Devotion* and *strict Vertue*, as the Laws of God prescribe: And thus they vainly think to

com
Com
to fu
negl
Thu
them
God
Soul
ving
a w
cerer
and
other
stead
Law
God
by p
ver
such
these
a th
inclu
(3
Doe
a ne
were
by e
whe
both
anc
and
Salv
latit

compound with God and their own Consciences, by abundance of the *Form*, to supply their Deficiencies in, and their neglect of the *vital Power* of Godliness. Thus did the *Pharisees*, who to ease themselves of the harder Duties of *loving God with all their Heart, with all their Soul, and with all their Strength, and loving their Neighbours as themselves*, found a way to be satisfied with an outward ceremonious Purity, the *washing of Cups, and Pots, and brazen Vessels*, with many other the like trifling Observances, instead of the weightier Matters of the Law, postponing the Commandments of God, and rendring them of no Effect, by placing Religion where God had never placed it. Well may it be ask'd of such at the great Day, *Who has required these Things at your Hands?* I must add a third sort of false Teachers, equally included in this Caution.

(3.) Those who teach and require any Doctrine or Doctrines to be received, as a *necessary Condition of Salvation*; which were not taught and enforced as such by our Saviour and his Apostles. Now whether it be in Faith or Practice, or both, to preach or publish a Doctrine as an essential Part of the Christian Religion, and a necessary Term and Condition of Salvation, which was not so taught by Christ

Christ and his Apostles, tho' not a Doctrine contrary to what they taught, is to pervert the Christian Religion, and to corrupt the Professors of it. Christ has not left it in the Power of the Ministers or Officers of his Church, to add any new Doctrine to his Religion. St. Paul, who was an *Apostle* (as he describes himself in the beginning of his Epistle to the *Galatians*) not of Men, neither by Man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father; to whom, as he says farther, even the known Pillars of the Christian Church, James, Cephas, and John, gave the right Hand of Fellowship, viz. received him as a Companion equal to themselves; even this great Apostle disclaim'd all Power of teaching any other Doctrine, than what the Apostles had preach'd, and the Churches received. But tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven, says he, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that we have preach'd unto you, let him be accursed. Which shews, that the Foundation of the Christian Religion was already laid, and that the Gospel which was then preach'd, was not only immutable, but also sufficient: And that neither the inspired Apostles, nor the unfinning Angels might either add to it, or take away from it. But here I must interpose this Caution, that tho' the es-

sential

essential Parts of the Christian Religion cannot be altered, nor can there be any Thing added thereto, nor taken away by any Power upon Earth : Yet our Saviour has committed into the Hands of the Ministers of his Kingdom, a Power not only to proclaim and divulge, to enforce and urge, to maintain and defend, but also to explicate and unfold those essential Articles, according to Occasions and Emergencies, and in Proportion to the Rule of Scripture, and the Analogy of Faith. Moreover, our Saviour has entrusted with the Ministers of his Church, a Power to make Constitutions and Canons relating to the external Regiment thereof, as also to frame Liturgies and public Offices for the solemn Worship of God, and the Administration of the Sacraments, to appoint Times and Places of Worship, to determine smaller Controversies for Peace and Unity-sake, and to prevent Schism and Division. All this the Ministers of Christ may do, and be *true and faithful Teachers*, but to teach any Doctrine, contrary to the Doctrines of the Gospel, or to *add any Thing new*, as an essential Part of the Christian Religion, which was not made so by Christ and his Apostles, is to be a false Prophet.

(4.) And *Lastly*, Such also may be look'd upon as false Teachers, or Seducers

cers from the true way of Salvation, the practical Piety and Vertue of the Gospel, *who are continually entertaining their Congregation with unnecessary Disputes in Religion,* and turning their Heads and Hearts to an over eager Zeal for Notions, that are either Uncertain, or of little Importance. How many such Teachers are there in the World, who think themselves Happy enough, if they can but start some new Speculation to spend their Zeal upon; and Holy enough, if they do but furiously advance in their Instructions some Point of Doctrine (perhaps a meer Opinion) which happens in their Time to be deny'd by others, or oppose what others have asserted, tho' the Point in debate is *Lana Caprina*, an inconsiderable insignificant Thing to Salvation, which a Man may know or be ignorant of, believe or disbelieve, without being at all nearer to, or farther off from the Kingdom of Heaven? And what's the Consequence of this Teaching? It sublimates Religion to such Niceties, as to make it wholly evaporate at length in a Sett of airy and useless Notions; and draws off the Application of Men's Minds, and the warmth and vigour of their Spirits, from the Practice of Christian Duties and Vertues, to Things that are not only little to the Purpose of

of the
will
amin
whe
othe
quen
nion
unch
rit of
to ex
as th
strin
or a
ved
Chr
our
thes
neft
liver
ters
tain
nam
ly a
by t
be
nor
Aud
prof
ther
I
may
-15

of their eternal Happiness, and which will never enter into Account at the Examination in the Day of Judgment, whether they held the one side, or the other: But which really have a Consequence directly opposite; as these Opinions prejudice them with a furious and uncharitable Biggotry, and perhaps a Spirit of Persecution, (if it lye in their Power to exert it,) against those that think not as they do. I speak not here of such Doctrinal Points, as the Divinity of Christ; or any other which may be clearly proved from Scripture, to be essential to the Christian Religion, and consequently to our Salvation by Christ. To preach up these steddily and zealously, is but earnestly to contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints; but I speak of Matters as are more disputable, more uncertain, and of less concern, I will not name them. Let every Teacher carefully and impartially examine his Doctrine by the Word of God, and let none of us be wise above what is written there, nor trouble our selves, nor amuse our Audience with *Doctrines which have not profited them, that have been occupied* ^{Heb. 13.} *therein.* I proceed now to shew,

II. *The Marks whereby a false Prophet may be discerned.* As to these I have in

a great Measure fore-stalled my self, in what I have said already; for describing the *False Teachers*, I could no other way do it, than by describing those *Doctrines* which denominate and shew them to be such. The evil Tendency therefore of their *Doctrines*, and of their way of Teaching, to divert Men from the Esteem and Practice of Holiness, being pointed out by our Saviour (himself, as the chief Mark whereby to discover these False Prophets (*For by their Fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them*;) and this being sufficiently spoken of under the foregoing Head; I shall not need to insist upon it here again. But there are two other Marks, that may help us in the discovery of them, worthy to be considered, *Pride* and *Covetousness*: The one or the other of these being the governing Principle, that induces such Men to their corrupt Teaching, will some way or other shew it self in their Conduct, if it be well observed, and therefore they may stand for farther Tokens, to distinguish them from the true Ministers of Christ.

(1.) *Pride* is very conspicuous in them, notwithstanding their great Dissimulation. A secret Thirst of being famed and talked of, makes them uneasy to be restrain'd to the ordinary Road of Preaching up a good Life, according to the plain and practi-

CH
pra
have
or re
them
vain
there
Doct
Wise
Leve
and
Opin
whic
terta
are n
tified
ther
Bord
the
ties
They
Man
seque
they
They
Arm
sy so
only
ven
ture
out i
Sins,
tance
V

practical Tenor of the Gospel. They have here no Latitude to shew their Parts, or recommend their Learning, and raise themselves a Reputation, which they are vain enough to believe they merit, and therefore they affect either *Novelties* in Doctrine, that their Understanding and Wisdom may seem to be much above the Level of their Brethren, or a disputative and eager Zeal for some Party, or some Opinion already advanced by others, which they know is a popular way of entertaining an Audience, whose Passions are more easily and more acceptably gratified than their Reason, and who had rather be taught to rest themselves upon the *Borders* of Religion, than to be led into the *Heart* and *Bowels* of it, in such Duties as they do not care to practise. They know that the vicious Part of Mankind is much the greatest, and consequently to obtain a general Applause, they must not bear too hard upon Vice: They must sow Pillows under Mens Arm-holes, and bolster them up in an easy sort of Religion, that will bring them only to the *Surface* of Morality; and even this for *Form-sake*, for corrupt Nature it self can hardly be content without it; but to tell Men roundly of their Sins, to press them to a thorough Repentance and Amendment; to put them up-

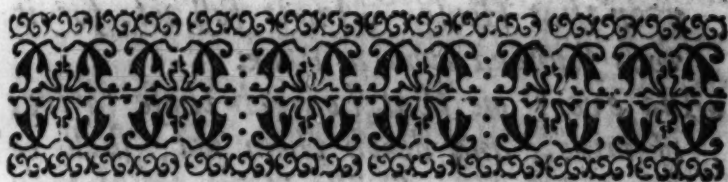
on the necessary Exercise of all Christian Vertues and Duties, and to tell them plainly, there is no Salvation but in the way of sincere and serious Holiness; this they imagine would spoil their Credit with the People, and therefore they preach to them what is infinitely *less* to the Purpose of Religion, but *much more* to *their own*. Sometimes indeed when Religion happens to be in repute, their Affectations must correspond with it; and then it is observable, they carry Things to an extream: They screw Religion up to Superstition, and even their Garb, their Gesture, their Voice, their Phraseology or Expression, and every Thing else about them, is affected, that they may by these means come to be taken Notice of, and pass for Men of extraordinary Strictness and Holiness, Knowledge and Spiritual Gifts; these Singularities being mighty apt to strike People with a Veneration for them. And thus the Vanity of being admired, will shew it self in different Shapes, in some more directly, by an haughty Air, an imperious Conversation, a positive and pompous Way of Preaching, a vain-glorious Boasting mighty Things of themselves, and an Affectation of shewing their Parts and Learning: In others more craftily, by an affected false Humility, put on on-
ly

ly to excite the rest of the World, to praise and cry them up. Be ever jealous therefore what a proud Man teaches, compare it carefully with the Scriptures, and the Explications of better Men, and if it agree not with the latter, 'tis reasonable to be suspected; if it agree not with the former, he is certainly a false Teacher. But if nothing of Pride, or its Consequences appear in him, let it be well considered, whether there is not,

(2.) *Covetousness*, or a worldly Interest driving on in his Doctrine, and discernable in his Behaviour. That this is a Principle very natural to False Teachers, by which they are most commonly acted (and whereby they may easily be discovered) St. Paul intimates to us, when he speaks of some in his Time, *Who subverted Tit. 1. 11. whole Houses, teaching Things they ought not, for filthy Lucre sake.* And so in his Epistle to the Romans also, he fore-warns them, *Rom. 16. Now I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learn'd; and avoid them: For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly, and by good Words and fair Speeches, deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* St. Peter also has left it upon Record, that such there would be in after Ages of the Church. *There shall be False Teachers.* *Pet. 2.*

Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable Heresies, &c. And through Covetousness, shall they with feign'd Words make Merchandize of you. The Love of Riches makes them teach what will please rather than what will edify, puts them forward to a disputative and Party Zeal, as more for their Purpose, than inculcating Piety and a good Life: Dependance makes them afraid to speak out plainly against Sin, or the sordid Thirst and Prospect of some Gain, induces them to flatter the Vices of their Audience, by unfaithful and corrupt Interpretations of the Word of God; or the like greedy Humour stirs them up to frame such new Doctrines, or advance such convenient Superstitions, as make to their own Profit and Advantage. Whereas a true Mi-

- nister of Christ, seeks not his own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved. Wrongs no Man, corrupts no Man, defrauds no Man. Neither at any Time uses flattering Words, nor a Cloke of Covetousness, as False Teachers do, but preaches the Word of God with all boldness; whether it shall please or displease, and be an advantage or disadvantage to him. In all Things shewing himself a Pattern of good Works; in Doctrine shewing Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity.*



CHAP. XVI.

Of the Necessity of Obeying the foregoing Precepts.

MATT. VII. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25,
26, 27.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But he that doeth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? And in thy Name done many wonderful Works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work Iniquity.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock:

And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat

upon that House: And it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock.
 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand:
 And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House: And it fell, and great was the fall of it.

THIS Conclusion of this most excellent Sermon of our Lord, does very aptly Crown the whole with one general and most important Doctrine, that the Performance of his Precepts, the living up in Practice to that noble Scheme of Religion which he has left us, is the only effectual Proof that we are Christians, the only safe Foundation for our Hopes of Heaven. Or if I may be allow'd to express his Sense in other Words; it is as follows,

“ Having revealed to you the Will of
 “ God so perfectly, that it is impossible
 “ for you now to be mistaken in your
 “ Duty, I expect, that ye my Disciples
 “ should be as exact in your Obedience,
 “ as I have been in my Revelation: For
 “ the bare Profession of my Religion,
 “ the

“ the calling me Lord, Lord, without
“ a Practice conformable to such a Pro-
“ fession, will be of no Advantage to
“ you at the Day of Judgment. Many
“ will say unto me in that Day, Lord,
“ have not we sufficiently proved
“ our Discipleship by our extraordinary
“ Zeal for thy Service, and great Per-
“ formances in thy Name, such as Pro-
“ phesying, casting out Devils, and do-
“ ing many wonderful Works. These
“ surely will entitle us to thy Favour
“ and thy Kingdom; acknowledge us
“ therefore as thy Followers, and re-
“ ceive us into everlasting Happiness.
“ But my Answer to such vain Preten-
“ ders will be, that tho’ they taught
“ my Religion, yet since they did not
“ practise it; tho’ they cast Devils out
“ of others, yet since they did not cast
“ all wickedness out of their own Hearts;
“ tho’ they wrought many wonderful
“ Works, yet since at the same Time,
“ they wrought Unrighteousness, they
“ are no Disciples of mine. Hence from
“ my Presence, *all ye workers of Iniquity.*
“ For without a strict and conscientious
“ Obedience to my Laws, in the Course
“ of an Holy and Religious Life, Chri-
“ stianity is but an empty Name, Zeal
“ for it but a wrangling and contentious
“ Heat, Salvation but an idle and de-

" ceitful Hope. He therefore, who not
 " only hears my Precepts but obeys them,
 " who orders his Life and Conversation
 " by the Rule of God's Word, as I have
 " delivered it to him, is like a wise Man
 " who lays the Foundation of his House
 " upon a Rock, which thus founded
 " stands firm and secure against all the
 " Violence of Winds and Waves. But
 " he who grounds his Hopes of Accep-
 " tance and Salvation on any other Bot-
 " tom than such sincere Obedience, is
 " like a Man who builds his House up-
 " on the Sand, which not being able to
 " withstand the Fury of a Tempest, or
 " an impetuous Tide, will certainly be
 " beaten down about him, upon the first
 " Attacks of either, and thus his House
 " shall perish.

Since not our *Hearing* only, but our
Doing of the Will of God, is declared by
 the Author of our Salvation to be the
 Rock alone, whereon we may safely
 build our Hopes of it; my Business must
 be to shew the meaning of this Expressi-
 on, or what is here to be understood by
doing the Will of God. It is, in general,
 the being obedient to Christ's Laws, the
 doing of those holy and righteous Works
 which he ordain'd we should walk in,
 the fulfilling all Righteousness establish-
 ed in the Gospel, and delivered in this

Ser,

Sermon. But to present you with a more distinct Explication of this, we are to consider,

I. That however diligent, zealous and successful we may be in doing those Things, which serve to *propagate* and *support* Christianity, or accidentally relate to it, as *Means* and *Instruments* of true Religion, 'tis not sufficient to reach the Extent of what is comprised in this Expression, *of doing the Will of God*. Men are not therefore the true Disciples of Christ, and effectually entituled to Salvation, because they can defend the Truths of Christianity, or labour hard to gain Profelytes to it, or even work Miracles in behalf of it, not because they constantly attend the Preaching of God's Word, the Prayers of the Church, or private Devotions of their own, or reading their Bible, or other instructive Books of Religion at certain Times of Leisure. These Things, tho' good and excellent in their kind, tho' of great Use and Service to the Church, tho' very advantageous to their own or other Mens Souls, are yet but the Means and Instruments, not the End and Substance of Religion. Attending diligently upon the outward Means of Grace, is a Duty necessary to every Christian; but not for its own Sake only; if
we

we stop there, 'tis all but vain Formality and Hypocrisy: 'Tis requisite with relation to Faith and a good Life, but if they lead us not effectually to these, they will never bring us to Salvation. And therefore our Saviour declares, that at the Day of Judgment he will answer all such after this manner, *I never knew you*, that is, I never approved or allowed of those Faculties and Powers ye pretend to, *as the Condition* of being my Disciples; and yet that was the great Power of Prophecy, and doing Miracles, as appears by the Pretence they are brought in to make, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works*. But since the great Condition of the Gospel, is Obedience to the Law of Righteousness; and that every one who nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity; they who are as well Workers of Iniquity as Workers of Miracles, who preach the Word of God, but practise it not, cannot expect the Portion and Inheritance of the Disciples of Christ. To this Purpose is that Discourse of St. Paul to the Corinthians, *Tho' I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, have the Gift of Prophecies, understand Mysteries and Knowledge, have a Faith strong enough to re-*
move

1 Cor. 13.

1.

move Mountains, if I have no Charity with all these, I am nothing. And therefore tho' he allows the Acquisition of spiritual Gifts for the Service and Edification of the Church; yet he there plainly prefers Charity before all of that nature, as being the Substance of that Condition required by Christ: for *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, whereas the other is only the Instrument or Ornament of it in the World. But then,

II. We are also to consider, that every *sudden and imperfect Act of Religion*, tho' it more immediately tend to Holiness, and may be the *Beginning* or a *Branch* of it, every *partial Sketch* of Vertue and Goodness, tho' necessary and commendable, so far as it goes, is not therefore to be accounted fulfilling of the main Condition, or sufficient to be called a *doing of the Will of God*: For as the former might be compared to the producing of Leaves, the yielding of some Ornament and Protection to Christianity; so *this* may be resembled to the bringing forth of Buds and Blossoms, which yet arise not to the bearing of Fruit. And it is very plain, that every Inclination and good Affection for Religion, every honest Purpose and Resolution, every sudden Act of Contrition and Humiliation, and Instances of
the

the like nature, which are but the *Beginnings* of Religion, are not to be esteem'd and characterized as fit Conditions of Acceptance and Discipleship. If they stay there, the Duty is only in its *Greens*, in the first Draught and Shadows; and if it never come to finishing, the Men are like those Creatures which imperfectly resemble the Human Shape, the *more deformed* for the *rude Conformity*. A Picture of this we have in the Description St. Paul has given us, where he brings in one justifying the Law of God, that it is holy, just and good, but yet he did not observe it; he accuses himself for what he did, and what he did not, *For the Good that I would, that I do not; and the Evil that I would not, that I do*; that by virtue of his inward Man he delighted in the Law of God, but yet by the Strength of another Law in his Members, contending and struggling against the Force of this, he was enslaved and captivated to the Law of Sin; he had many good Affections by times, but no good thing abiding in him; his Will was often right, and he resolved and purposed many excellent things, but still he was defective in the Performance. This is the Character of one who is *set forward* in his Work, but *goes not on with it*: And of this Temper we shall meet with many in the World, who have their

Fits of Repentance, Prayer and Fasting; who hear much, and are angry with themselves, condemn their own Follies, and think it reasonable they should live better: All which are excellent Lines of Duty, and fair Beginnings; but then they fill them up with such a Mixture of Impurity, such ill Colours, and foul Blemishes, and frequent Apostacies, that they destroy their own Foundation: They would fain be better, but yet they are not; nay, they go as far as *Herod*, who not only heard *John Baptist* gladly, but *did many things*; and farther than *Felix*, being *fully perswaded* they should be Christians; and they do thus much towards it, that they correct some Follies, put a stop to some vicious Habits, use the Solemnities of Religion, and are very punctual and severe in some external Observations of it; but then they are weary, they will go no farther, they grow confident and careless, and having done *something*, fancy they have done *enough* for Heaven, while Sin still retains its Hold, and the strong Man keeps Possession. All this is represented by our Saviour, in the Parable of the Seed, where that which fell on the stony Ground, or amongst Thorns, or by the Way-side, altho' it spring up for a time, grows into some Degrees of Height and Fairness, yet is lost before
before

before the Time of Harvest, and there is no Fruit arises from it. These are so far from being true Disciples, that they are the Stain and the Reproach of their Profession, and instead of the Rewards assured unto that Fellowship, they shall find those contrary ones, of him who knew his Master's Will, and did it not, *they shall be beaten with many Stripes.* But here, this Caution is to be interposed, that since the Strength and Power of Religion grows by the Measures of a Man, by easy and undiscernable Degrees, that we be careful not to give an ill Name to every State of Imperfection: The Apostles used the Compellation of Babes and little Children to such as were in this Infancy of Religion; and such may be allowed, because they are growing up, their Strength encreases, they still rise higher in their Profession, and these are kindly and tenderly to be treated; but we are not speaking of the Children, but the *Dwarfs* in Religion, People of no Stature, and of as little Hopes, who are already risen to their full Pitch, when they may be said to have but begun: and surely these are very unworthy the Stile of Disciples, whose Measure it is to be perfect, as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect. But then,

III. Thirdly, Since neither of these will satisfy the Condition, what is it that will? And here the Answer must be in general, *Doing the Will of God, or a Life of Holiness and good Works*, springing from a Principle of *Faith in Christ*. For thus stand the Terms of the New Covenant, which God has made with us through Christ our Redeemer. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* ^{John 3. 36.} Here is *everlasting Life* promised by God, but *Faith in Christ* exacted as the Condition to be performed on our part. But St. James has told us, that *Faith without Works is dead*; and lest we should mistake in so important a Concern as the Terms of our Salvation, St. Paul (who has said as much of Justification by Faith as any body) has most clearly open'd the Terms of this Covenant, with regard to Works also, when he thus represents the Engagement both on God's part and ours. *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.* ^{2 Tim. 2. 19.} God is pleased to engage on his part to take care of us in a particular manner, and to save us; but then our Part of the Cove-

Covenant is, to *depart from Iniquity*, that is, to live in an entire Obedience to the Commands and Prohibitions laid before us in the Gospel. And this is a Condition so absolutely necessary, that he elsewhere represents it as the great Design and End of our Redemption. *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works.* The Grace of God appear'd for this purpose, to teach us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World. So that when we speak of *Faith*, as that which saves us, we mean such a Belief in Christ, our Saviour and Lawgiver, as makes us chearfully give up our selves to the Conduct of his Spirit; Obedience to his Laws, and Dependance upon his Sacrifice, to render us and all that we can do acceptable to his Heavenly Father. When we insist upon *good Works*, 'tis as the genuine Effect of such a true Faith, and such an Effect, as if it do not follow and appear, our Faith is vain, and all our Hopes of Heaven deceitful. From this close Connexion between Faith and good Works, it is, that when either are named, as the Condition of Salvation, the other is understood. And therefore, *Doing the Will of God*, includes both *believing in Christ*,

Christ, and living up to that practical *Rule of Righteousness*, which he has ordain'd for us to walk by. For thus our Saviour determined in answer to the Question of those Auditors, who demanded what they must do to work the Works of God? *This is the Work of God* (says he) *that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* ^{John 6. 29.} Here then we have a large Prospect: for that we may be the Disciples of Christ, we are to believe his Revelation, and to obey his Commands, and to reverence him as our Saviour and Lawgiver, and in imitation of him to put on the Form and Habit of a new Creature, in Newness of Life, a Course of Christian Holiness and Vertues; Sobriety with regard to our selves, Justice and Charity towards our Neighbour, Piety and Zeal towards God. This is the great Purpose of St. James, in his Discourse concerning the Perfection of the Christian Life, in the strict Union of Faith and good Works, where he assigns a just Portion of Duty to both: for he who believes, does what he ought. *Thou believest*, says he, *that there is one God,* ^{Jam. 2. 19.} *thou dost well*; but then believing alone is not enough, for *Faith without Works is dead*, and the Religion of it is no more than the evil Spirits are able to practise, *the Devils also believe and tremble.* The Apostle represents it by the Insignifican-

cy of the kind Words of him, who bids his needy Brother depart in Peace, and get him better Cloaths and fuller Provisions, but still assists him not in either; the Neglect betrays the Charity, and the Man is yet as naked as before: Even so Faith, altho' it be the Profession of the Truth, and those sound Words which Christ revealed; yet when it stands thus by it self, assists nothing to Vertue and the Perfection of Religion; it is but naked, nay, worse than that, says the Apostle, *it is dead*: But when it inspires and actuates all the remaining Parts of Duty, when it is an Argument and a Principle, when it provokes to Holiness, when it convinces the Man, and supports his Religion; then a Christian may be said to be doing the Will of God: and this is to arrive to the Degree of a new Creature, viz. to live the Life of Christ, to keep the Commandments of God, to do the Work and Business of renewed and transform'd People, to live after the Spirit, and not after the Flesh; which being the old and natural Principle, is unfit to govern the new Life. And now that we have gone thus far, ye may imagine, that there is nothing farther to be added: But there is one Word remaining, which can by no means be spared from this Argument. Our Endeavours must extend

extend to *ALL the Will of God*, and not to some Parts only. Therefore,

IV. *Fourthly*, Let it be observed, the true Disciple of Christ sets no Bounds to his Obedience: He neither straitens it with regard to the *Subject*, nor the *Degree* or *Measure*. He does not pick and chuse what Commands he will comply with, and reject the rest; he does not single out the most easy, grateful, popular, or advantageous Vertues; but as chearfully takes up the Yoke of the most difficult and painful, the most unpopular and self-denying, whenever Providence puts an Occasion for them in his way. He does not only adhere to his Duty while the Sea is smooth, the Weather fair, and the Wind favourable; but under the roughest Storms of Temptation, Affliction, or Persecution: He will not recede in any point from a good Conscience, let what will happen; his Duty he both knows and does, the Event he leaves to God. Nor will he stint his Vertues as to the Growth and Measure of them; he knows he can never be too good, and therefore he incessantly labours to grow better; he daily strives to improve in a more nice and strict Obedience to all God's Commands, in a more fervent and devout Performance of all Duties, and in a

more exalted Degree, and a more exact Practice of every Vertue. In short, he aims at *Perfection*, tho' in this Life he cannot reach it: The Love of God constrains him; he would be like God, because he loves *him*, and is therefore in love with Holiness. He thinks (and he thinks truly too) that he does not sufficiently do the Will of God, if he can satisfy himself with any thing short of an exact and persevering Conformity thereto: for we are expressly commanded by

Mat. 5. 48. *our Holy Master, to be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*; that is, sincerely to endeavour to come as near the Pattern of his excellent Holiness as we can, by copying it in all manner of Vertues, and in the most exalted Height of them. So St. Paul exhorts also, *I beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, ye would abound more and more.* And

1 Thess. 4. 1. *So St. Peter too, Giving all Diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity: for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Know-*

ledge

ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where ye see plainly, that it is required, not only that these things should be in us, but that we should abound in them; and by this continual and industrious Progress towards Perfection, we shall make it appear we are true Christians. If it be demanded, whether this Height of Perfection, or continual Industry to attain it, be so necessary, that we cannot be true Disciples of Christ without it? I answer, *That he alone belongs to Christ, who hath* Rom. 8. 9. *the Spirit of Christ abiding in him;* and where the Spirit of Christ dwells, it will assuredly possess a Man with a most ardent Desire and Ambition to be whatever Christ would have him, and to speak and act as Christ would speak and act upon a like Occasion; it will always stimulate and excite to farther Degrees of Holiness, because he inwardly delights in the Law of God, and is thoroughly convinced of the Reasonableness, the Pleasure, and the Excellence of the Divine Life. I answer also, that tho' Perfection cannot be attain'd in this Life, and therefore we may be Christians *without attaining* it; yet our Duty herein is so plainly laid down, that I dare by no means say we can be saved *without sincerely and diligently aiming* at it, and coming up to it *as nearly* as we may; and tho' Almighty God may please,

out of the Fulness of his Mercy, to *accept of less*, yet since he *requires so much*, it must be look'd upon as the only safe Rock, whereon to lay the Foundation of a Christian's Hopes of Happiness. Perhaps this may offend those who are for getting to Heaven *with as little Trouble as they can*, and are for no more Vertue, Piety and Goodness, than they think will just serve to save them: but this cannot be help'd; for we must be faithful, and in setting down the Measures of Duty, we are not to examine what Men usually do, or what they have a mind to do, but what God requires of them.

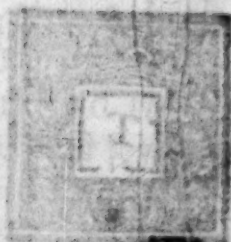
Thus (by the Blessing of God) I have finished my Explication of this most excellent Sermon of our Saviour in the Mount, and have endeavoured to shew the true Meaning, Latitude, and Extent of every Precept: and were this noble Scheme of Religion put in practice by all those that pretend to be the Disciples of Christ, how glorious and how comfortable a Place would even this World be: which, on the contrary, neglecting these Rules, which would make them happy as well as holy, it is filled with Violence and Injustice, Feuds and Factions, Impiety, Profaneness, and Hypocrisy, Lewdness and Debauchery, Cenforiousness and Hard-heartedness, and every Vice that may

may make one another uneasy here, or lead to Eternal Misery hereafter.

What yet remains, is only to consider the Historical Conclusion of the Evangelist upon this Sermon, and his general Observation of the *Manner* of our Saviour's Teaching, and the *Effect* of it.

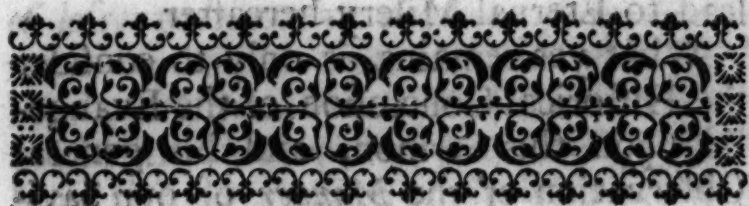
THE CONCLUSION.

MATT. VII. 28, 29.



A a 4

The

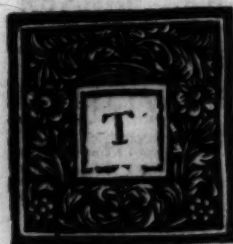


The CONCLUSION.

MATT. VII. 28, 29.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these Sayings, the People were astonished at his Doctrine.

For he taught them as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.



THESE are the Words of the Evangelist St. Matthew, wherein he shews what Effect our Saviour's most excellent Sermon had upon the Audience, *The People were astonished at his Doctrine.* And likewise what it was that made that Impression upon them, viz. the *Difference* there was in the Authority of his Teaching, from that of the Scribes. Let us therefore look into *the Ground* of their Astonishment, the *Difference* they observed in

our
cur

our Saviour's way of teaching from that of the Scribes. The Evangelist expresses it thus, He taught them *ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων*, as one that had Power or Authority, and not as the Scribes. Commentators differ in explaining this Word *ἐξουσία*, which our Translation renders *Authority*; but including the several of their Interpretations, and adding farther what I take to be implied therein, I shall sum up the Differences of our Saviour's Teaching from that of the Jewish Doctors, so far as I think was here intended by that distinguishing Character of *Authority* or *Power*, under the following Heads.

(1.) He taught them *as a Prophet sent from God* to perfect and compleat the Revelation of his Will, and *not as a merely human Teacher*. The Spirit of Prophecy had ceased in the Church for several Ages; the Scribes did not pretend to it. They only taught what they had learn'd in the Schools of their Rabbi's, explain'd and commented upon the sacred Text; and this very corruptly too. But our Saviour knowing that he was come from God, with full Authority not only to rescue the Moral Law from their false Glosses, but to refine upon the Text it self, not only to explain, but to improve and perfect it, express'd himself in a manner suitable to his High Commission. *Ye have been*

been taught, says he, by your Learned Doctors so and so; BUT I SAT UNTO YOU thus and thus. Here therefore was an Air of Authority in his Preaching, which the Scribes neither did nor could pretend to, and which accordingly his Audience knew nothing of before.

(2.) This Authority in his Preaching was attended with and illustrated by a Power of working Miracles; which evidently shewed him to be a Teacher more than human. Fortho' this upon the Mount was one of his first Sermons, yet even before this (yea, and immediately before it) he had gone about healing all manner of Sickneses, and all manner of Diseases amongst the People. And the Admiration of this Divine Power in him, it was that actually drew the Multitude together about him, when he delivered this excellent Sermon. Here therefore was such a Proof of his Prophetic Mission, such an Authority added to his Discourses, as must needs amaze the People, who had never known any thing like it from their other Teachers.

(3.) The Matter of his Doctrine was every way worthy of a Teacher sent from God. The Scribes indeed entertain'd the People with a Set of idle Traditions, Superstitions, and trifling Observances, and many little Exactnesses in Ceremony:

But

The CONCLUSION.

363

But our Lord instructed them in the weightier Matters of the Law, laid out to them a most divine and excellent Scheme of Morals, and taught the *Inside* as well as the *Outside* of Religion. He would not suffer them to rest satisfied with the formal Shews, or with the outward Mechanism of Vertue; but carried his Precepts to the *Heart*, requir'd Sincerity in the inward Man, and thereby also shewed an Authority to which the Scribes could not pretend: for who can impose Laws upon the *Heart*, the *Thoughts* and the *Desires* of Man, but God who made him, and sent our Blessed Lord, his only and eternal Son, to instruct and govern him?

(4.) And lastly, these Precepts were delivered with such a *Certainty*, *Boldness*, and *Plainness*, as far excelled the Teaching of the Scribes. They, as being guided only by the Opinions of their Schools, could deliver nothing clearly, and with a full Assurance; and as human *Ignorance* might mislead them, so did human *Passions* too: They were to oblige the People by servile and undue Compliances, enervating the Law of God By such Interpretations, as would gratify the Pride, and other Vices of their Congregation, or give such a Turn to Religion, as would best serve their own base and worldly Interests.

John 3.
34.

rests. On the contrary, our Saviour's Teaching was with a positive and definitive Certainty, becoming one who thoroughly knew the Mind of God, one in whom was hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, in whom dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily. *For he whom God hath sent (saith John the Baptist, speaking of our Saviour) speaketh the Words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by Measure unto him.* And as he delivered his Precepts with an authoritative Certainty, so he delivered them with an authoritative Boldness and Impartiality: he had no occasion to fear that any thing in his own Conduct should reproach him with his own Precepts. He boldly delivered the most severe Doctrines and Instructions, not caring whom they would displease; he *search'd* the Wounds of that imperfect and corrupt Morality the Scribes had taught them, *to the bottom*, as knowing that this was necessary to set them right, and bring them into the healing Way of Salvation, tho' their false Guides would storm at it, and the People too would probably be offended to be undeceiv'd, and put upon a more laborious and effectual Straitness than that to which they had hitherto been trained.

Thus I have explain'd, as well as I am able, the Difference betwixt our Saviour's Teach-

The CONCLUSION.

365

Teaching, and that of the Scribes, in respect to the *Authority* and *Power* with which he preach'd, according to the Evangelist's Observation. I shall conclude with a few Words to recommend the Excellency of the Revelation made by Christ (including the *whole System* of it, as well as *this* his *Sermon on the Mount*) which should farther affect us Christians with a special Regard to it. And here particularly we are to consider, that it was the Revelation, not of an inferior Prophet, tho' commissioned and inspired from Heaven; but of the *Eternal Son of God*, under the Disguise of Human Nature. And of how much greater Authority such a Revelation ought to be, we may learn from the Author to the Hebrews, *Therefore* ^{Heb. 2. 1, 2, 3.} *we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirm'd to us by them that heard him. And again, Moses was faithful as a Servant, but Christ* ^{Heb. 3. 1, 6.} *as a Son over his own House, or Family, the Church. Thus does the Apostle amplify the Authority of Christ's Teaching,*
as

as being first revealed to the World, not by Angels, not by Prophets, not by usual and common Messengers ; but *by the Son of God himself*. We are to consider this Revelation also as most *clear* and *perspicuous*. The most important Truths were formerly hid in Types and Symbols. *Moses* had a Glory upon his Face, but a Vail put upon that Glory. But now the Vail upon his Face is *done away in Christ*, and we all with open Face, as in a Glass, behold the Glory of the Lord. Now are the greatest Truths and Promises no more mask'd under Types and Shadows, but exposed unto us with open Face. No Precepts can be plainer or better than those which are given us by our Saviour. Were all the Philosophers of former Ages, were all the Prophets that ever lived, were all the Angels that are in Heaven, summon'd to meet and consult together, to prescribe Laws, and to propose Motives to Human Nature, they could not add one useful thing to what Christ has revealed. He has forbidden whatever dishonours God, disturbs the World, or weakens and blemishes Human Nature, as *Pride, Covetousness, Sensuality*, and all the other Sins that flow from them ; and on the contrary, has commanded whatever tends to the Glory of our Creator, to the general Welfare of Mankind, and the Ease and Com-

2 Cor. 3.
14.

The CONCLUSION.

367

Comfort of every single Person; as, *Faith in God* for our Support under all the Uncertainties of this World; Love to him, that we may enjoy him, and so be happy and blessed in him; *mutual Love to one another*, and all the Vertues thence arising, *Meekness, Patience, and Humility*, that we may be easy to our selves, and also helpful each to other. And lastly, that we may want nothing to perswade or assist sincere Obedience to these Precepts, our Saviour assures us of God's Grace to strengthen our Weakness and Infirmities. He threatens everlasting Woes to obstinate and impenitent Sinners, and he promises eternal Happiness to every true and faithful Penitent. We may add farther, that this Revelation by Christ is the *very last Revelation*, that God will ever make to the World, and therefore we ought to have the greatest Regard imaginable to what he has delivered to us as the Mind and Will of God. All former Revelations were but Introductions to this, *carnal Ordinances*, says the Apostle, *imposed on the Jews till the Time* Heb. 9. 10. *of Reformation*. This Time of Reformation was the Dispensation of the Gospel by our Saviour. *God, who at sundry Times* Heb. 1. 1; *and in divers Manners spake in Times past* 2. *unto the Fathers by the Prophets, has in these last Days spoken unto us by his Son.*
The

The Gospel therefore is the last Discovery and Attempt of the Divine Wisdom for the Reformation of the World; nothing has since appear'd, or ever will appear by Divine Authority and Appointment, to make the least Alteration in it. If ever we aim at or expect eternal Happiness, it must be in the Way which Christ has taught us, upon those Terms, upon that Faith, and that Scheme of Piety and Virtue, which *He* has prescribed to us. Let us therefore pray in the Words of our most excellent Church, *Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

F I N I S.



